

REDEFINING URBAN DESIGN THROUGH PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

by

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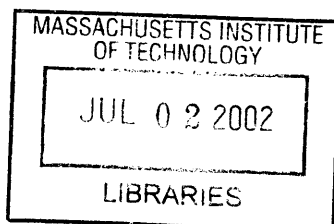


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ABSTRACT

This thesis started with a search for an expanded framework of urban design and an observation on the way projects were implemented and how downtowns revitalize themselves.

The search showed that the expanded framework of urban design should be thought of as both a product and a process. As a product, urban design addresses the urban environment's hardware (the physical attributes and characteristics) and software (the social and perceptual experience of places). As a process, urban design consists of the design and management aspects. To design is to formulate and develop plans and schemes of actions. To manage is to facilitate the outcomes and ensure that they are well kept and would last.

The observation on project implementation revealed that successful urban developments require both a good design mechanism and a good management mechanism. A successful development would result in an increase of activities for the area; it can be measured using pedestrian counts, number of new businesses, retail sales, etc. The good design mechanism is the urban design plans that are used to formulate, execute and regulate the hardware and software of urban environments. The good management mechanism is provided by institutions that could develop and market an area or the city itself (including events and activities), manage spaces and places and provide services to the downtown.

A look at how most downtowns have responded to the changing needs showed that downtowns are looking at institutional arrangements that embodied public-private partnerships to carry out developments and redevelopment plans, to revitalize themselves and promote growth and to compete with each other and the suburbs. The examples are the business improvement districts (BIDs), downtown associations/alliances, and city center corporations. These institutional set-ups bridge the interest and needs of the public and private sectors, allow stakeholders in the downtown to work together to shape and create the desired urban environment, and allow the city to market itself as an entire area or a combination of small areas to compete for the share of residents, employment and revenues.

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Introduction

These themes explored in this thesis are: What does it take to make developments in the downtown successful? What are the implementation tools or mechanisms?

The discussion is presented in three parts¹: Part 1 presents the thesis; Part 2 demonstrates the thesis with two sets of examples; and, Part 3 concludes thesis.

Part 1 is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the definition of urban design as both a product and a process. It ends by combining the two ideas into an urban design matrix. Chapter 2 highlights issues and challenges facing the downtown's development and proposes a response. It presents the public-private partnership as the common strategy, and the design and managing aspects as the common mechanisms. Chapter 3 traces the development of urban design as a discipline. It shows how the concept has evolved to include many aspects besides making beautiful plans and drawings. Chapter 4 looks at the new institutions that have played major roles in downtown developments. It compares the public sector initiatives and the private sector initiatives, and concludes that the concept of business improvement districts is more comprehensive as a managing mechanism. Chapter 5 presents the development of each of the mechanisms in graphics.

The examples in Part 2 are presented separately in Chapters 6 to 9. These projects are of different scale. Each of the projects is well known, for there have been lots of discussions made on them. Some have received acclaims. They are used to demonstrate how downtowns have approached developments. The projects are grouped into two main themes; hence, there are two sections. Projects in Section 1 have formulated their approach using both the design and managing mechanisms. Projects in Section 2 have started their approach from using either design or managing mechanisms.

There are two chapters in Part 3. Chapter 10 accounts the events behind the writing of this thesis, the limitations of the study and proposes some directions for future works. Chapter 11 concludes the thesis by summarizing the main points.

¹ However, the chapters are sequentially numbered.

PART 1: EXPLORING THE THEMES

On the mechanics for physical developments,
Prof John de Monchaux (October 2001) said:

***SEED IT WITH GEOMETRY
NURTURE IT WITH INSTITUTION SYSTEM***

The mechanisms are design and management.

Chapter 1 Expanding Urban Design Framework

Introduction

Successful downtown developments like New York's Times Square, St. Paul's Lowertown Historic District, and Boston's Post Office Square have clear distinctive images and well-managed urban environments. Most visitors to these places usually have a good first time impression and experience. They would also remember the urban environments fondly and would not hesitate to repeat the visit. In fact, they would encourage others to visit as well. The urban environment of these places is not a result of chance as they are carefully guided by urban design. But, what is urban design?

Basically, there are two important concepts in urban design. The first looks at urban design as dealing with an object or product, i.e. the urban environment. The second describes 'a process by which quality of change in the built environment is facilitated'¹. It is by integrating the two concepts, i.e. urban design as both a product and a process, that we can have a comprehensive understanding of what urban design is and relates it to downtown developments. Figure 1 shows the concept described as Urban Design Framework.

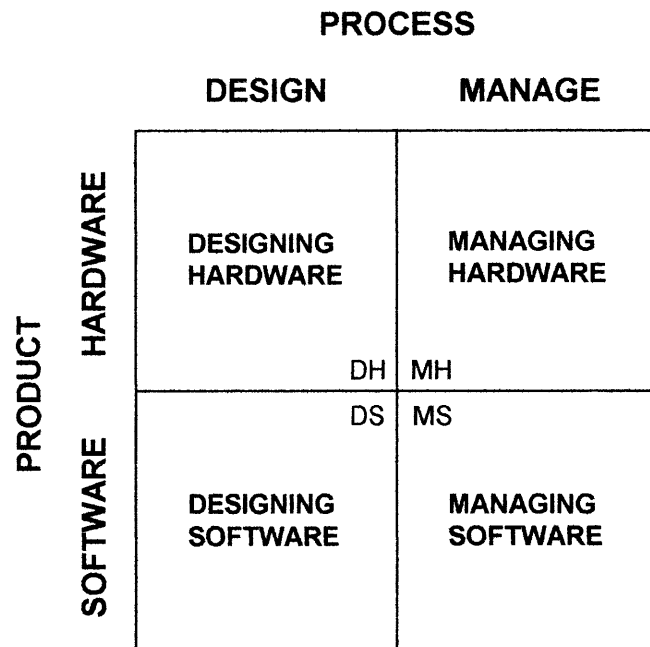


Figure 1: Urban Design Framework

¹ UK DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND THE REGIONS An article on 'The Training for Urban Design: Chapter 2' on the web.
<http://www.planning.dtlr.gov.uk/urbandesign/training/02.htm>

Urban Design as Products

Usually when urban design is referred to as a product, it is used to denote a set of plans or guidelines and the physical environment that is made up of streets and squares or buildings and open spaces because:-

- a. A majority of the literature has associated urban design as something that deals with the physical urban environment;
- b. Most discussions have been generated by the professionals involved with aesthetics and art; and,
- c. The term itself has its root as a tool to control the aesthetics of developments.

The discussion has always centered on the aesthetics of the environment, i.e. the visual beauty of the landscape. 'This visual beauty of the landscape can be measured either quantitatively through studies of preferential selection and behavior based on a set of guidelines and policies, or qualitatively by a skilled viewer's orientation and skills,'² usually through design review panels or design advisory boards.

These discussions on urban design centered urban environment as a piece of art that 'emphasize the activity of perception, the formulative contribution of perceiver in aesthetic experience of environment, and the fundamental reciprocity of perceiver and environment.'³

Unlike paintings and sculptures, but like architecture, 'an urban environment is far more complex and engages the participant in intense awareness. The experience of an urban environment is not exclusively visual but actively involves all the sensory modalities synaesthetically, i.e. it includes factors such as space, mass, volume, time, movement, color, light, smell, sound, tactility, kinesthesia, pattern, order, and meaning. Hence, the traditional aesthetics is extended not only the material surroundings but a multiplicity of physical, social and perceptual features.'⁴

Therefore, urban design must address both the hardware and the software components of the urban environments. The hardware is about the physical attributes and characteristics that made up the environment; normally, a set of urban design plans and guidelines is prepared to guide and achieve the desired look. The software is about the social and perceptual experience of meanings, traditions, and familiarity of the space and place; the urban environments are given meaning and sustained by a series of programs, events, activities and services.

² KELLY, Michael (Editor in Chief) 1998 Encyclopedia of Aesthetics: Volume 2 Oxford University Press pp 114-120

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

Urban Design as Process or Service

So, does urban design mean designing the hardware and software? What does design mean? To answer these questions, we look at urban design as a process or service. The 15th Edition of Encyclopedia Britannica (1990) defined design as ‘the process of developing plans or schemes of actions.’ It explained that ‘in fine arts to design is to engage in a creative process; in the applied arts it is to develop a sense of pattern for making a product; and, in engineering it represents a concise record of the embodiment of appropriate concepts and experiences. In architecture and product design, the artistic and engineering aspects of design tend to merge.’⁵

While the definition of design in urban design is similar to that of architecture, there are other considerations that urban designers have to take into account. The design process in urban design is not a static and linear process. It evolves and continues to do so even after the hardware and software are established. Often the hardware and software take years to be realized while situations or conditions might have changed as time passes; hence, urban design is a long process that needs to take social, economical, political, and other changes into considerations.

Also, urban design is usually a creative process that involves more than one person and gets its input from varied sources, even if there is only one person that prepares the final blueprint. Often, the final plan is a synthesis of ideas and visions proposed through processes such as citizen participation.

A simple definition of design in this context is the act of formulating and developing plans and schemes of actions. Note that it does not include implementation.

The Encyclopedia Britannica clarifies that ‘the execution of plan is not, properly, designing, except insofar as the plan may continue to develop in order to meet originally unanticipated requirements.’⁶ Arguably, the designer has completed his job when there is a blueprint for the making of an object.

While this may be true for the most artistic venture, the job of the urban designers, like the architects⁷, do not end when there is a plan for the development of the urban environment. Urban design is a more complex process than just the act of designing the blueprints for developments. Designing the blueprints only takes only a small portion of the timeframe of any development. Sometimes, the process entails designing further schemes to get a project going. A more fundamental question is how do the urban designers achieve their product and see their effort bear fruition if urban design only focuses on design without caring about the implementation processes.

⁵ ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, INC. 1990 The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Volume 4 - Micropaedia - Ready Reference 15th Edition Chicago pp 33

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Thus, in an architect’s office, the designers is often a different group of people than those whose responsible to implement the project such as the project managers, contract administrators, etc.

Hence, like architecture, there is a need to consider how these blueprints would be realized, what to do in the event that situations and circumstances change, what is needed to maintain and sustain the realized vision, and whether further design and marketing are necessary. In short, the concept of urban design as a process should take into account how the vision and objectives, set out in the urban design, would be implemented, maintained and promoted.

The act to facilitate the outcomes and to ensure that they are well kept and last can be categorized under the management aspect.

The Expanded Urban Design (UD) Framework

From the process point of view, urban design consists of both the design aspect and the management aspect. And, from the product point of view, it consists of both the hardware and the software. By putting the product and process point of views together, we can develop an urban design framework – see Table 1.

Table 1: The Urban Design Framework

	UD AS PROCESSES / SERVICES	
	DESIGN	MANAGEMENT
UD AS PRODUCTS	Formulation and development of plans or schemes of actions.	Facilitating the outcomes and ensuring that they are well kept and last.
HARDWARE The physical attributes and characteristics that made up the environment.	Visioning and formulating plans and guidelines to create the distinctive look for the environment while making sure that the environment is convenient and comfortable for users.	Implementing, maintaining and promoting the vision for the urban environment.
SOFTWARE The social and perceptual experience of meanings, traditions, familiarity, and contrast.	Programming and developing a set of uses, events, activities and services.	Marketing the events and activities, managing the spaces and places, and providing services to the downtowns' customers.

Note: Acronyms, DH, MH, DS and MS, are used to indicate each of the quadrants.

This urban design framework clarifies the term urban design that is used by ‘some people to identify a distinct discipline which, like architecture and planning can be practiced; it is used to describe the form, and character of towns and cities; and it is also used to delineate the complex processes of development and the activity of shaping and managing change.’⁸

The framework helps to clarify the term to delineate the complex processes of development and to describe the activity of shaping and managing change. It offers people in the downtowns a way to think comprehensively about how they want to promote and market downtowns. The design and management aspects become mechanisms to response to the changing needs of downtowns.

What are the needs and challenges that downtowns face? How have downtowns responded to these changing needs? How have the downtowns approach developments and redevelopments to revitalize themselves and promote growth? What have the downtowns been doing? Are design and management the common elements or mechanisms that they share? These questions will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁸ A study for UK Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions has this definition in article on The Training for Urban Design – See Chapter 2, Article 2.1.2 in <http://www.planning.dtlr.gov.uk/urbandesign/training/02.htm>

Chapter 2 Issues Affecting Downtown Developments

The Challenges and Needs for Downtowns

By the 1980s, American downtowns have lost most of their functions and their attractiveness as city centers for people to live, work and play as a result of economic, social, political and environmental changes. During the next 2 decades and beyond, downtowns found that their planning needs have also changed.

The following list the challenges and needs for downtowns:

- a. Downtowns have to be economically self sufficient;
- b. Downtowns (as cities) have to compete with other cities and the suburbs;
- c. Downtowns have to promote 'strategic planning'¹ at one level and maintain 'local democracy'² at another; and,
- d. Downtowns have to develop unique and pleasant environments.

Being self sufficient

In the 1970's, the local governments found that they had to cope with reduced federal funds. For example, the urban renewal program that used to be a huge source of funds for the city revitalization processes was suddenly no longer there when Washington shut it down in 1974³. Cities had to search for new sources of capital and looked at different management strategies to be self-sufficient and to support the growth and management of their cities. Many shifted their focus to the private sector to provide the additional resources and to be more involved in solving public problems.

Competition with each other and the suburbs

In the last 20 years, competition between cities and the suburbs for the share of economic development and growth have grown more intense. There are several factors that cause the increase in competition:

- a. People and businesses have left the cities for the suburbs;
- b. Technological changes, the Internet boom and globalization have allowed people and businesses the choice to locate anywhere in the world; and,
- c. Ranking by independent agents on 'Best Cities' helps people to choose the place that they would like to live in and businesses to choose places they would like to locate in.

¹ CASTELLS, Manuel 2002 Lecture on Planning in the Network Society The Special Program for Urban and Regional Studies (SPURS) Spring Semester 2002 Seminar Series on Comparative Planning Cultures. Critical stakeholders are brought together for an agreement or set direction for a plan.

² *ibid.* To involve all the stakeholders in the planning process.

³ SAGALYN, Lynne B 2001 Times Square Roulette: Remaking the City Icon The MIT Press, Cambridge pp89

People and businesses have left the cities for the suburbs

Suburbanization has lured the middle-income group away from the cities; this ultimately led to a reduction in tax revenue. The retailers followed and moved outward to serve these residents. Companies also create new employment centers near where these people live.

By the late 1980s, this was a common phenomenon for most cities. Cities were left with a poorer group of people and weaker economic conditions. There was an overall increase in crimes and undesirable activities in the cities. The local governments have to look for ways to clean up the streets, maintain security and promote economic growth. These cities searched for new management tools as they tried to attract the residents and businesses back, and to revitalize the downtowns and promote growth of the cities.

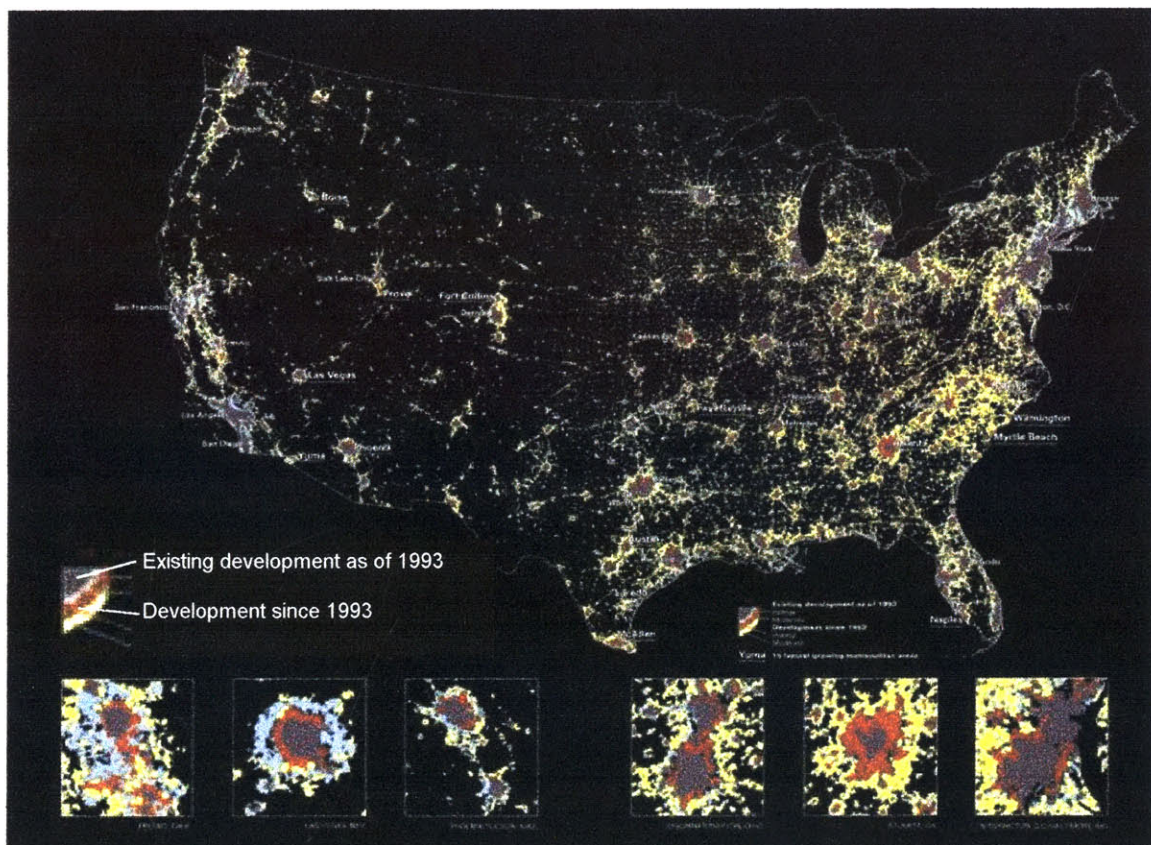


Figure 2: 'Sprawl at Night'

Galaxies of light across the United States illuminate the scope of sprawl; yellow and red reveal its radiating creep just since 1993. People have migrated to the periphery of cities "to find more housing for less money," says Alex Krieger of Harvard University. "Until this advantage is neutralized, sprawl will remain in our future."

Source (image and text): The National Geographic website

http://magma.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/data/2001/07/01/html/ft_20010701.3.html#

Composite Image: National Geophysical Data Center, NOAA; Raw Satellite Data: U.S. Air Force Defense Meteorological Satellite Program; National Geographic Maps.

Technological changes, the Internet boom and Globalization

In the 1980s, companies started to separate the various functions and found that they should take advantage of lower rents at locations further from the cities for certain functions. Changes in technology made it possible for companies to locate the supporting functions away from their headquarters. They only needed to maintain functions that required public interface in the cities.

Technology also allowed these companies the choice to locate anywhere, and thus, increasing the competitions between the cities for the handful of companies. Cities like Houston benefited from a tradition of having oil-based companies already established in the cities, while other cities like Austin benefited from similar agglomeration conditions.

The development in aviation industries, telecommunication and Internet in the past decade has increased our mobility tremendously. A coast-to-coast trip now only takes 8-10 hours. Most businessmen traveling from west to the east coast take the red-eye flights that allow them to catch some sleep while being transported to their destinations. A person who travels from east to west could leave early in the morning and still be able to conduct a meeting on the afternoon of the same day. Modern gadgets like laptops with Internet access and mobile phones have made them more travel-savvy and have increased their mobility, and yet still allow them to remain productive, efficient and effective. It is now common to hear about the modern workers who spend equal portions of time every month on both sides of the coast or in different cities.

The alternative to traveling is teleconferencing, which is becoming common nowadays. Examples include the real time lectures and presentation conducted by Singapore-MIT Alliance and Cambridge-MIT Institute despite the time difference between the cities. A more common tool is the instant messenger services that allow two persons at different parts of the world to communicate at the same time. The person could add web-cam in order to be able to see each other. Ideas in the form of plan and sketches can be scanned at good resolution and presented using simple graphical tools of any software program, e.g. word document, and then sent instantly through the messenger service for discussions.

Thus, today people have choices to live and work anywhere. They could have more than one home. While people are mobile, cities are not (yet). Thus, cities have to compete with each other to attract the businesses and talents. Manuel Castells in the Comparative Planning Culture Seminar at MIT (Spring 2002) observed that this phenomenon led some cities in other parts of the world to open up and loosen their immigration procedures. We could also say that these technological changes make downtowns and cities seem obsolete. What we need is the high-speed Internet connections within the space we live to work; the living space can be homogenous as in the suburban housings or high-rise apartments as envisioned by Le Corbusier. However, we know that this is not true for we need to experience different kinds of places to live, work and play.

Ranking by Independent Agents on Best Cities

The increase in mobility allows people to visit, seek out and compare places to live and work. Therefore, it is not surprising to observe that in the last 10 years, both printed and web-based popular media have been ranking cities on how well they do and provide for places to work, live and play.



Figure 3: Looking for the best
Three website banners.

Sources:

<http://www.bestplaces.net/>,
<http://www.entrepreneur.com/bestcities/0,5271,,00.html> and <http://money.cnn.com/best/bplive/>

For example, Money and Fortune magazines⁴ hold annually rankings to pick the best cities “for business” and “to live”. The Money website also allows one to find his or her best place to live in. The magazine has compiled housing costs, tax rates, crime statistics, and much more on nearly 500 towns to help one to find the hometown of the ones’ dreams. It provides a search engine that compares and finds the best hometown for one to live in. It provides a search to compare the cost of living between any two U.S. cities and how much the same pays in another city.

There are many other websites that provide data and rankings of cities, according to a variety of criteria from economic growth to services like educational and medical facilities. An example is Sperling’s Best Places website⁵ where it allows one to compare two cities according to certain attributes such as number of crimes, cost of living, and climate.

The underlying fact is that cities are competing for the same businesses and residents. Suddenly, the problem is not what to do with making better use of local resources especially land, but how to lure the residents and business back to downtown. The critical questions are ‘what can downtown provide to the residents and business’, ‘how to provide the needs’ and ‘who should be the main leader’.

Promoting ‘Strategic Planning’ and ‘Local Democracy’

The rise of civic and advocacy groups in the 1970s and the call for more citizen participation in the planning processes in the 1980s have dampened most cities interest to carry out comprehensive planning. Furthermore, the planning processes were taking longer than expected and required too many resources in term of manpower and money. However, downtowns still need to think and plan strategically to ensure future growth.

⁴ Asiaweek magazine carries out similar ranking each year for cities in Asia.

⁵ See website <http://www.bestplaces.net/>

On the other hand, downtowns have to address the people's need to contribute inputs and ideas into the developments in downtown. However, the public consultation processes more often than not caused difficulties and delays to projects. It was difficult to reach consensus and the result might not represent everybody's view. In addition, there is a need for downtowns to quickly source for information from various parties such as private developers, professionals, business owners and citizens on the type of spaces and places that people need.

The question is who should be responsible for the planning and development and how can consensus be achieved quickly.

Developing unique and pleasant environments

In the 1980s, many downtowns were gloomy places ridden with poor economic conditions, crime and environments that needed cares. They needed to build a positive image of themselves, to create attractive settings to live, work and play, to conjure up lively programs and activities, and to ensure that each was unique to allow them to position themselves strategically in the market.

They also needed to build a more positive image for themselves. Imagery was important, as it would give a lasting impression; thus, they hoped to create 'symbolic expressions'⁶ in their city. They would achieve this either by developing single but significant projects like museums, civic and cultural buildings, or would adopt a more comprehensive approach like carrying out preservation and conservation works, and developing the city's skyline through the careful building of towers and bridges.

In addition, they needed to have vibrant and attractive environments to attract the businesses and residences. Vibrant as in there are many things for the workers and residents to see, do be engaged and involved in, and remember. Attractive as in there are enough diversity to attract and distract attentions of the workers and residences. Downtowns also tried to create more public space and spaces for communication and interactions. And, these spaces had to be conducive and well designed. They needed to have a variety of spaces and activities to generate and sustain interest of the people, residents as well as businesses. Not only that, downtowns had to serve as the 'entertainment centers' providing adequate amount of retail outlets, shopping centers, restaurants, entertainment venues, theaters, museums, sports arenas and stadiums.

Downtowns realized that in order to compete with the others and the suburbs, they needed an efficient and effective process to ensure that the wares are put in place, well run and taken good care of.

How have downtowns tried to adapt to the changes and needs? What are the tools and mechanisms that they use when they approach developments and redevelopments to revitalize the downtowns and promote growth?

⁶ CASTELLS, Manuel 2002. Examples are landmarks, gateways, signage etc.

The Downtowns' Responses

After World War II, the government provided the leadership for the US cities to reinvent and rebuild themselves. They would assemble land, provide basic infrastructure and carry out planning and urban design. At times, such as in the case of urban renewal, they would also implement projects.

In the 1970s, the role of the local government changed because they could no longer get financial support from the federal government. They have responded by privatizing their functions but their actions to assemble large pieces of land have displaced communities; the urban renewal was criticized.

In places like Boston, it was getting to be more difficult and time-consuming to carry out comprehensive planning. The local governments found that their hands were increasingly getting tied. These propelled them to find other ways (tools and mechanisms) to implement projects and carry out downtown revitalization processes. Christopher Hood, Lester Salamon and Mark Schuster have assembled and edited the discussions on the tools used by the government to implement projects⁷.

Among the different ways of categorization that these writers have proposed, the set of 5 basic implementation tools set out by Schuster is the most comprehensive. These are 'own and operate', 'property rights', 'regulation', 'incentives' and 'information'. In practice, these tools are not always used individually, but often simultaneously to facilitate developments and redevelopments in the cities. Even then, using them would not guarantee the projects to be successful, as these have limited influence.

Often, the public sector produces an urban design plan and comes out with schemes to get the market/private sector to implement the visions. This is the 'traditional' arrangement where there were clear roles between the public and private sectors. The public sector designs and the private sector implements.

Unfortunately, this is not an efficient mechanism. It is difficult to predict how the market will react to the plans and even more difficult to get the right reaction from the market. At times, more speculation than necessary occurs and that leads to a market crash. On the other hand, the cities cannot be passive and leave it to the market to dictate what is right for an area. This is also not an efficient solution for often, the invisible hand of the real estate market remains invisible. They have to look for a new solution.

⁷ The respective books are 'The Tools of Government' (1986), 'Beyond Privatization: The Tools of Government Action' (1989), and 'Preserving the Built Heritage: Tools for Implementation' (1997).

The public-private partnership

In some cities, the public sector seeks out, works with and relies on the private sector to carry out projects to revitalize the downtown. This is a 'modern' arrangement, where both the public and private sector view each other as partners when implementing projects. They work together to achieve common and shared goals.

The public sector also gave up the 'command and control' role to adopt the 'facilitator' role. In exchange, the private sector provided certain public infrastructures and benefits. They played a greater role from the inception stage to the completion stage of the projects, often providing their valuable insights and expertise. The urban redevelopment plans were prepared together, often through a negotiation process. Thus, the plans became more complex as they benefited from the private sector's input on programming and marketing strategies. In this model, the boundaries between the local government and private sector became less clear, and the roles and relationships slowly merged.



Figure 4: Horton Plaza, San Diego
An example of a successful single development public-private partnership venture.

Single development

The earliest form of successful public private partnership projects were found in cities like Boston (Faneuil Hall), Seattle (Pike Place Market) and San Diego (Horton Plaza) in 1970s and 1980s.

Bernard Frieden and Lynn Sagalyn⁸ observed that these cities worked with and shared financial risk with the private sector in a single urban project to carry out downtown revitalization.

This model has since been commonly used for downtown projects. Some professors recognized this model, where the public sector must have some financial commitment, as the only 'real' form of 'public-private partnerships'.

⁸ FRIEDEN, Bernard J. & SAGALYN, Lynne B. 1989 Downtown, Inc.: How America Rebuilds Cities MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts

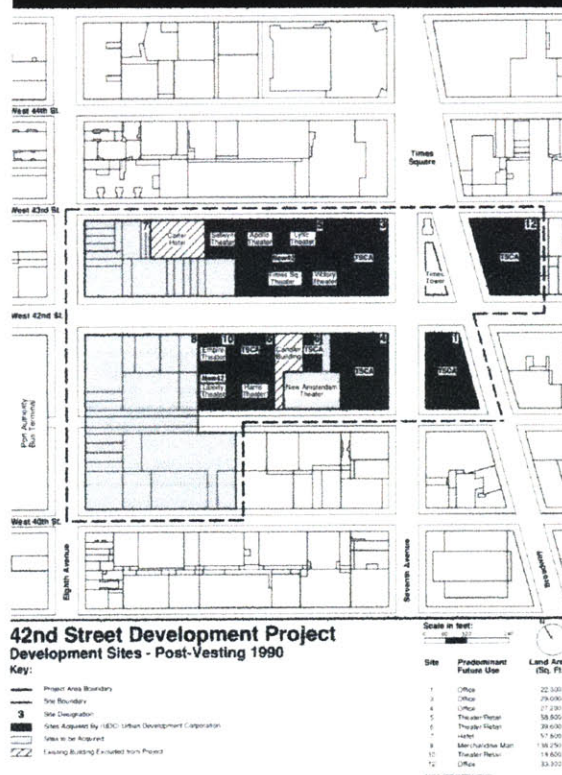
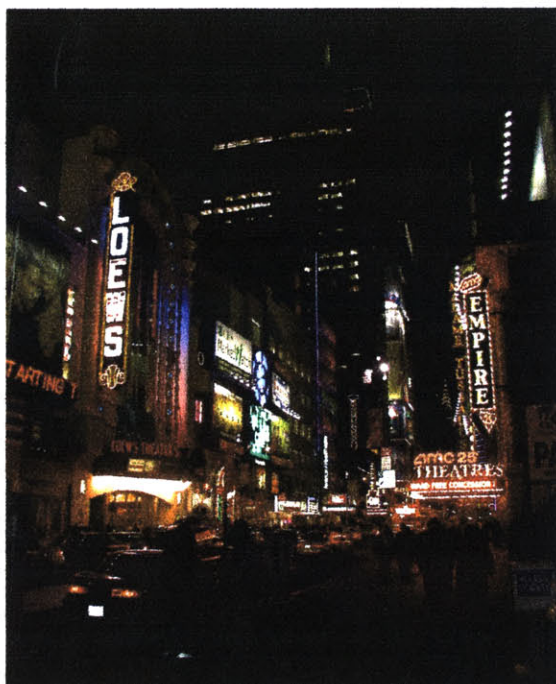


Figure 5: Times Square, New York
An example of multiple development projects with single interest.

Source: Sagalyn, Times Square Roulette 2001

Multiple Development Projects – Single Interest

In some cities, the problem of downtown revitalization was more complex. There was a need for more co-operative efforts between the different levels of governments and private sectors.

For example, in the case of 42nd Street NOW! project at Times Square, New York, the local and state governments collaborated to form the 42nd Street Urban Development Corporation as the main driver for the project.

Each capitalized on the other individual's strength to speed up the revitalization efforts; the state wielded the power to condemn land and overrode local land use regulations to set the groundwork for the project, while the city helped to bypass local approvals processes. The private sector advanced funds for land condemnation through 'density financing'⁹ strategy to assemble the land parcels needed for the project. The private sector had to bear the cost for infrastructure improvements either by building, financing, and delivering to the city specific infrastructure works or public amenities, or paying for the cost to construct those improvements.

Interestingly, the initial redevelopment efforts mirrored closely the 'traditional' model, where the public sector did the 'design' and the private sector provided the 'management'. But, as the project developed, the private sector architect, Robert Stern guided the ultimate look of the product, since design played an important role in the making of the project.

⁹ SAGALYN, 2001

Although there are many lessons that can be learnt, this case is unique and would be difficult to be emulated for other projects. For example, the strategies applied only work best when strong real estate market conditions prevail. Even then, it took several

years to overcome the lawsuits and litigations before the land could be assembled for development. More importantly, not every real estate is as valuable as Times Square for the formula to be repeated.

Multiple Interests and Stakeholders

By the 1990s, the competition for retail and tourists' dollars, jobs, employment and residences was increasing at both the regional and global scales. The private sector found that they could not wait for the local government to carry out downtown improvements. The stakeholders in the city realized that they had to work together for mutual gain and benefits to increase their power and influence.

This would help them to pursue and achieve the goals and objectives that otherwise they could not if they were to do it alone. They also realized that they had to work with the public sector to market and sell the downtown as an entire area or a combination of smaller areas. This collaborative strategy provides an effective and efficient process to achieve a vibrant and attractive environment using both the design and management mechanisms.

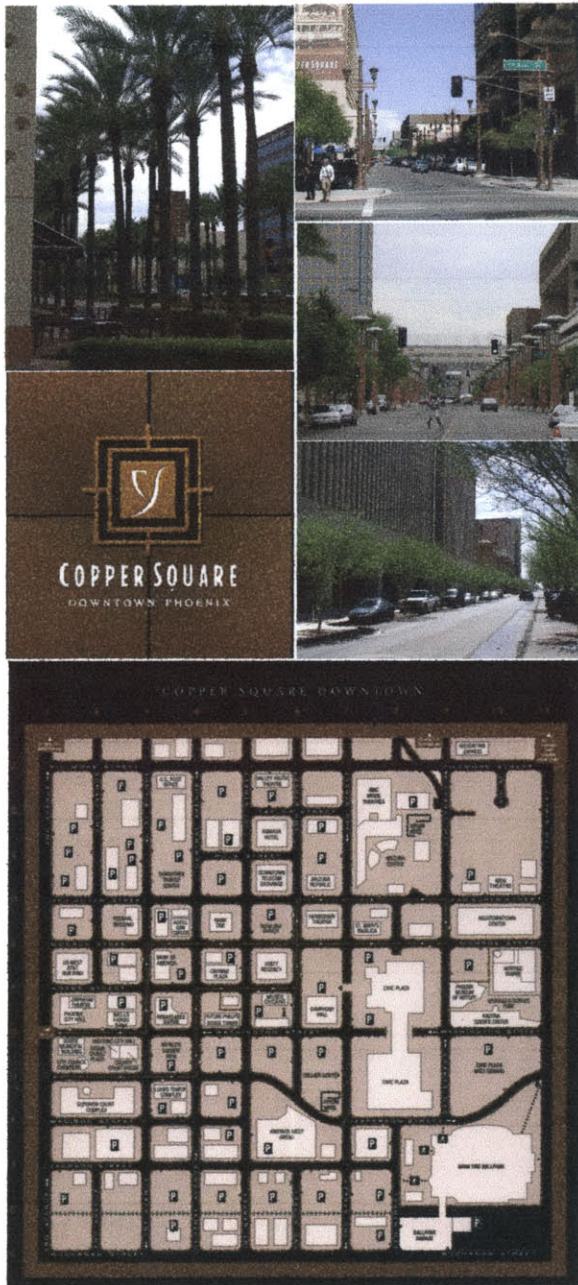
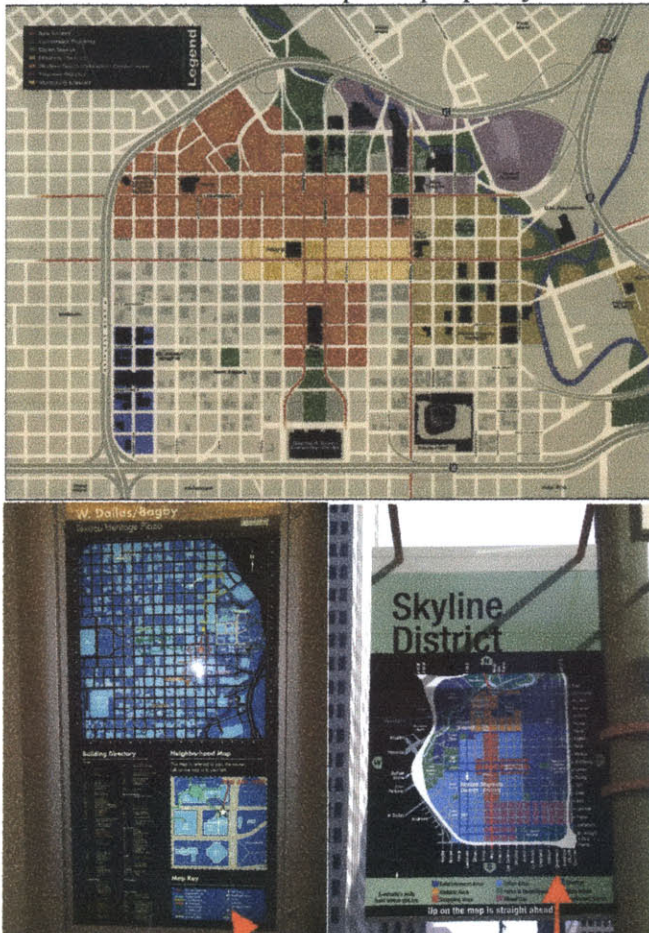


Figure 6: Downtown Phoenix's Partnership, Inc. is 'a non-profit organization made up of owners of property located between Fillmore and south of Jackson Streets, 7th Street to 3rd Avenue. The Partnership provides enhanced services to the Copper Square area, including: security, marketing, transportation/parking coordination, streetscape/urban design and streetscape maintenance services. Their program also includes public policy facilitation and business retention/recruitment services. Additional properties receive services through fee-for-service contracts.' Photos - Different streets in the area have different characters.

Source logo, map & text: <http://coppersquare.com/ne.html>

The public sector realized that they needed a more comprehensive planning and positioning strategies. They could not depend on one project to revitalize the downtown. They realized that there was a need to increase civic participation and to give the private sector a sense of ownership and propriety in the efforts to revitalize downtowns.



In order to do so, they would transfer certain responsibilities and liabilities to the private sector and they would involve the private sector in every management aspect – from strategic planning to implementation and the everyday running of the area. To achieve both the private and public sectors objectives, a separate and non-profit entity is formed. This kind of institution is sometimes referred to as the ‘third-party government or neocorporatism ... defined ... fairly simply, as the transfer of activities that were formerly associated with government to the private sector [or a non-profit institution].’¹⁰

City-wide Scale

One example is Houston’s Downtown Management District.

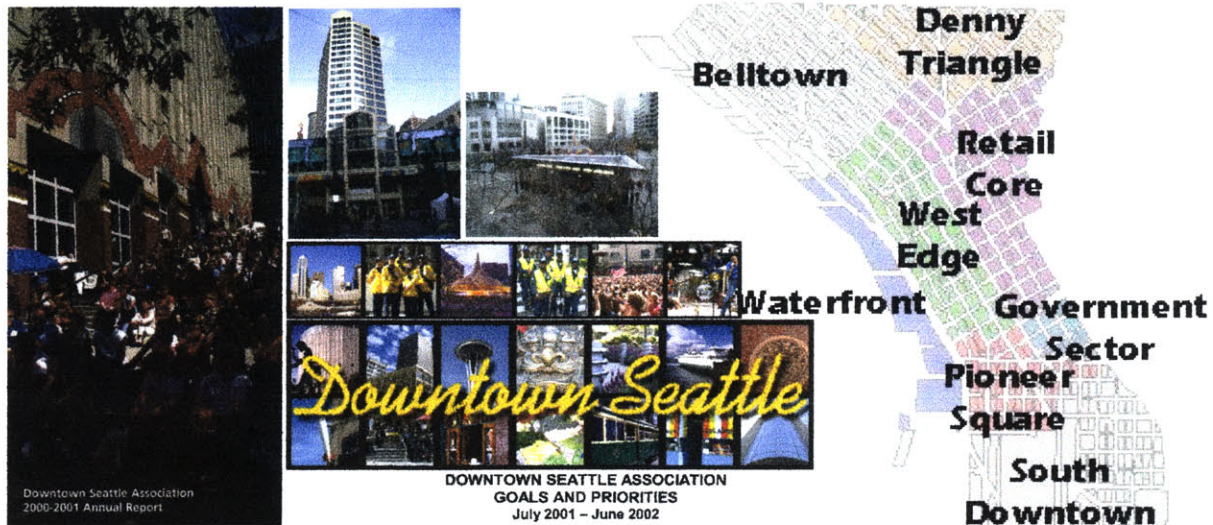


Figure 7: Houston Downtown Management District. The Downtown District comprised of many smaller districts. To guide drivers and pedestrian around downtown, the Houston Downtown Management District developed a comprehensive signage system. The new transit system that is being constructed along the Main Street.

Source: Briefing materials on Downtown Houston: The Business Capital

¹⁰ INGERSON, Alice E. (Jun 29 2000) An article on ‘Are Public-Private Partnerships Undemocratic?’ for Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies; The President and Fellows of Harvard College <http://www.icls.harvard.edu/PPP/critic3.htm> Origin: Weaver and Dennert 1987, pp. 433, 435-436

Other examples of partnerships at the city-scale level are Phoenix's Downtown Phoenix Partnership, Inc. for the area called Copper Square, Austin's Downtown Austin Alliance, Seattle's Downtown Seattle Association and San Diego's Centre City Development Corporation.



MISSION	<i>To champion a healthy, vibrant urban core.</i>				
GOALS	TRANSPORTATION, ACCESS AND PARKING: Improve all modes of transportation and access to and around Downtown.	ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Implement strategies to achieve a healthy, diverse Downtown economy.	MARKETING, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND EVENTS: Establish a high quality image of Downtown and communicate it effectively.	MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION: Develop an inclusive, broad-based membership that represents the diversity of Downtown.	URBAN ENVIRONMENT: Ensure that Downtown is clean, safe, attractive and well designed.
PRIORITIES FOR 2001-2002	PRIORITY #1: Advocate for a Sound Transit plan that maximizes use of the Downtown transit tunnel, does not increase Downtown congestion or worsen bus commutes.	PRIORITY #2: Lobby to increase density and affordable housing in Downtown. Continuing Priority: Implement Downtown Human Services Strategy.	PRIORITY #3: Develop new funding for Downtown-wide marketing plan and begin implementation.	PRIORITY #4: Develop strategy to increase organizational effectiveness. Continuing Priority: Retain 95% of current members, recruit 40 new members.	Continuing Priority: Provide excellent management of the Metropolitan Improvement District contract on behalf of the ratepayers.
COMMITTEES AND PROJECTS	Executive Committee/Sound Transit Task Force Steve Koehler, Koehler and Company, Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop positions and advocate for Sound Transit options that benefit Downtown Seattle Transportation Committee Mark Weed, Fisher Communications, Inc. Liaison A joint committee of the DSA, the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce and the Neighborhood Business Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop position on Alaskan Way Viaduct plans Track 520 EIS and potential impact on Downtown Research and take positions on Regional Transit Fall Ballot issues Monitor potential parking tax, develop position and advocate Other DSA Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop proposal for the future of CityPark Implement Flexpass program with METRO Research establishing a Transportation Management Association 	Growth and Density Task Force Jack McCullough, Phillips McCullough Wilson Hill & Fikso <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research, develop positions and lobby for view protection legislation Lobby for implementation of development regulation changes Participate in EIS for Comp Plan Discuss changing boundaries of Downtown, develop partnerships with adjacent neighborhoods Human Services Committee Rita Ryder, YWCA; Kathryn Williams, HomeStreet Bank <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop strategies to address homelessness in Downtown Develop support programs for MID transitional employment program Advocate to develop a day center for homeless men with chronic conditions Assist in human services siting issues Advocate for heroin treatment reform Monitor needle exchange relocation process, advocate for services that do not harm the neighborhood Other DSA Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for public toilets Advocate for Liquor Control reform Advocate for HRG projects Mitigate Dept of Corrections impact 	Marketing Strategy Task Force Yogi Hutsen, Starwood and Jeff Greer, Nordstrom, Co-Chairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with key businesses and industry professionals to implement Downtown Marketing plan Identify and raise funds for the Downtown Marketing Plan Establish a marketing directors roundtable discussion group Other DSA Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate Retail Leasing Focus Group Develop new brand for DSA Produce the Verizon Superpages Out To Lunch Concert Series, 62 free lunchtime summer concerts Find new Holiday event sponsors Produce the Holiday Carousel, the Holiday Lighting Program and Light Hike Contest Find 2002 OTL Sponsors Establish Events Corporation Expand DSA Events Integrate customer friendly attributes to website Develop Urban Hikes program 	Organizational Development Task Force Matt Griffin, Pine Street Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan to improve the strength and diversity of the DSA Board of Trustees, Committees and membership Explore changing definitions and boundaries of "Downtown" Develop clear explanations of the different roles and purposes of the DSA and the MID Membership Committee Mark Houtchens, Vance Corporation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop long term membership strategy Develop 4 Issues Forums for DSA Members Net increase of \$5,000 in membership Annual Meeting Committee To Be Appointed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set theme for May 2002 Annual Meeting Get a dynamic speaker 	MID Services Contract Lyn Krizanich, Clise Properties Chair, MID Board of Directors Neighborhood Task Force To Be Appointed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop improvement strategy for 2nd and Pike neighborhood Partner with Pioneer Square Community Association on improvement strategy for the Yesler Corridor Planning Committee Jerry Ernst, NBBJ; Patrick Gordon, ZGF; Denny Onslow, Harbor Properties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in Open Space Planning process Monitor Civic Center, Library, Aquarium and Sculpture Park Designs Participate in Street Furniture Catalog Project Develop Downtown Parks Strategy, advocate for implementation Participate in Wayfinding Part II Participate in development of Alaska Way Viaduct alternatives Monitor North Waterfront Access Strategy Monitor Waterfront Parking Strategy

Figure 8: Downtown Seattle Association managed the Metropolitan Improvement Districts (MID), which is a business improvement area funded by voluntary assessment by more than 700 properties in the downtown area. The MID area does not include Belltown and South Downtown. Photos – Westlake Center and its front plaza.

Source: Briefing materials and website <http://downtownseattle.com/index.php>

Some of these institutions are not only concerned about maintaining the cleanliness of the city, providing additional security and social services in the city, and carrying out research and marketing, they are also involved in carrying out capital improvement projects, managing parking and transportation issues, regulating the use of open spaces, formulating urban design guidelines and visioning a strategic plan for the area.

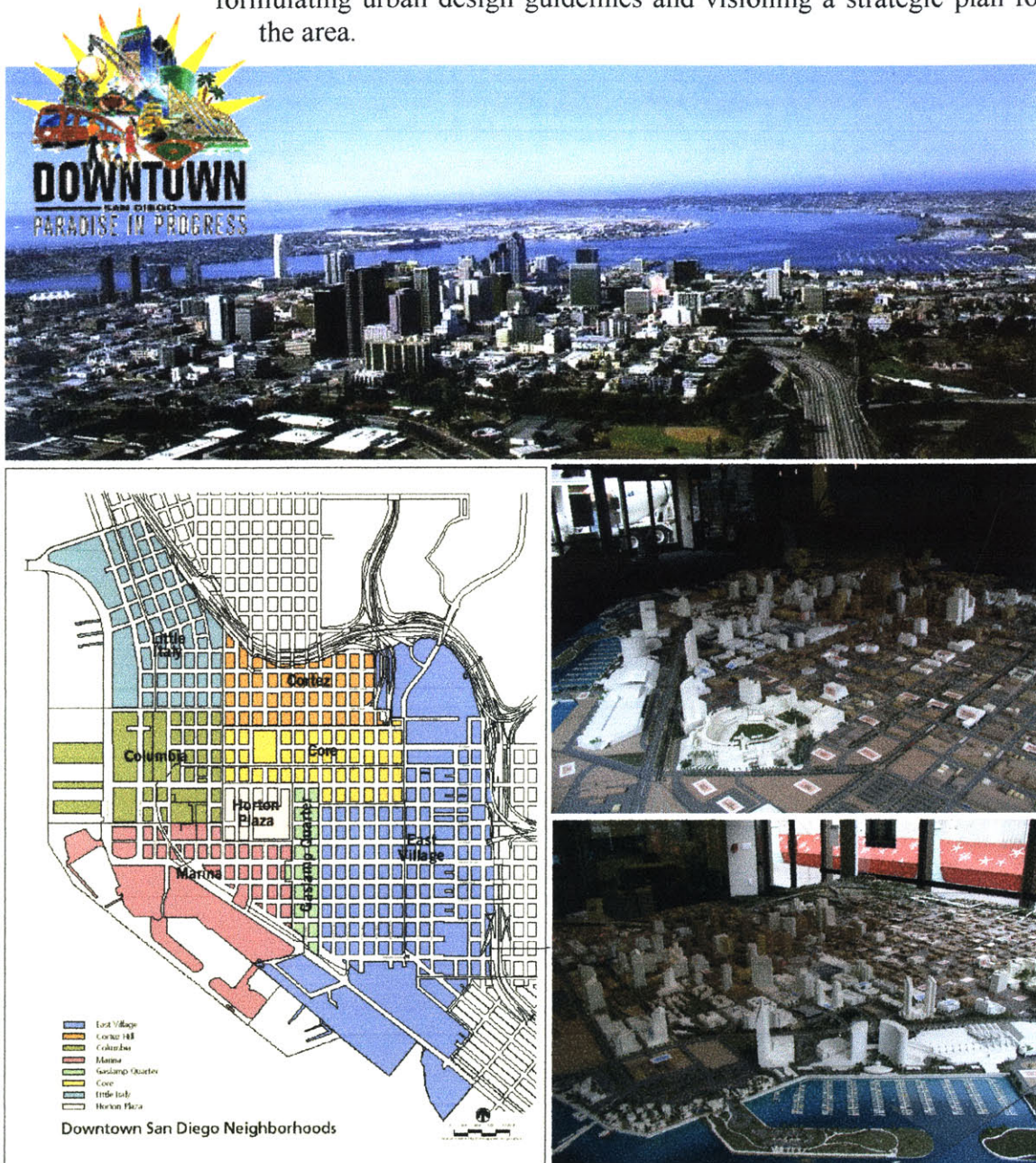


Figure 9: San Diego - The Centre City Development Corporation was created in 1975 as a non-profit corporation to implement programs and projects to turn the downtown's stagnant economy and physical condition around. Their responsibilities include urban design, planning and engineering, project development, management and financing, property assembly, public infrastructure and marketing the finished project. Photos – The white models are developments built since the 1970s.

Source: CCDC's website <http://www.ccdc.com/>

Area Specific

Examples of institutions that focus on the revitalization efforts and growth promotion for an area within a downtown are Lower Downtown Districts (LODO) in Denver and Lowertown Development Corporation (LDC) for The Historic Lowertown

District in St. Paul. The LDC combined both the design and management mechanisms in its roles and functions. It uses urban design to guide the redevelopment efforts for the revitalization of the historic district in St. Paul, which had won urban design awards.

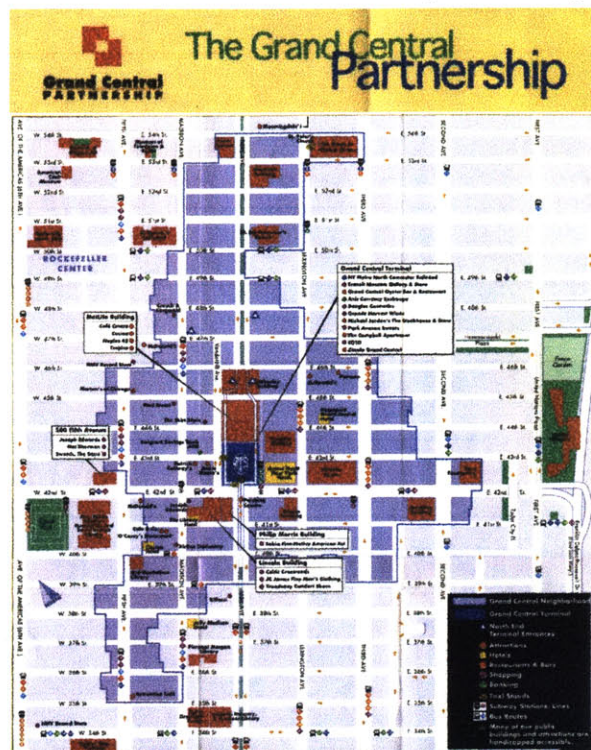


Figure 10: Grand Central Partnership, New York was founded in 1988. It is one of the largest BID's comprising of 76 million square feet and covering 68 streetblocks in Midtown Manhattan. The Partnership was created by the property owners to implement a comprehensive plan to revitalize Midtown Manhattan, which included an ambitious capital infrastructure program, and full-time privately managed sanitation and security operations to keep the streets and sidewalks of Midtown safe and clean.

Source: Grand Central Neighborhood: Map & Guide

Today, there are approximately 200 business improvement districts (BIDs) in California¹¹ and more than 130 BIDs in New York City¹². 'There is one in Lower Manhattan, New York's financial heart, one in Times Square, the center of its entertainment district, another in 125th Street in Harlem (the 'Black capital of the World), and another in run-down Lower East Side.'¹³ At Midtown Manhattan alone, there are the Grand Central Partnership, Fifth Avenue, the 57th Street, Museum Mile, and Times Square BIDs.

Many BIDs are targeted at the business communities. However, their role has been changing. Now, some of them include other stakeholders in the city, e.g. the residences and cultural venues. Since the concerns of all stakeholders are raised and addressed, cities with the latter model have a better competitive edge over other downtown and suburbs. They could jointly plan and shape the urban environment and market the desired image to create a successful downtown.

¹¹ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CITY OF SAN DIEGO 2002 Web-based article on 'Small Business Assistance: Business Improvement District' The City of San Diego, California

¹² HARDING, David Business Improvement Districts Revitalize New York Reproduced on the website <http://www.publicnet.co.uk/publicnet/fe990528.htm> by permission of Public Finance -The business weekly of the public sector <http://www.publicfinance.co.uk>

¹³ ibid.

This other model of 'public private partnership' is gaining importance as we crossed into the 21st century. It allows the downtown community and the stakeholders to achieve the shared visions, objectives and goals, to address the common interest and needs, to increase their networks, and to provide management support and funds. It gives them a sense of 'local democracy' since the institution is empowered to implement

projects if it can fund them. They need not look to the local government to solve all the city's problems. The downtown practices 'strategic planning' as the institution brings together different stakeholders to formalize the blueprint for the wealth and economic development of the cities.

The institutions would be involved in developing and marketing events and activities, managing the spaces and places in the downtown, and providing services to the downtowns' customers. It would also generate and sustain the interest of customers by achieving a desirable look for the urban environment. To do so, the institutions would draw up plans to revitalize the downtown that incorporated views and ideas of the stakeholders and the public, and act as the 'regulator' to ensure certain urban design guidelines were executed to meet the overall objectives.

Conclusion

The two common mechanisms for the development of downtowns in the past 20 years have also been design and management. The designers used the design mechanism to address the physical environments, while the institutions apply the management mechanism. These two mechanisms have become very important to downtowns as the advantages of having these institutions together to promote growth and carry out revitalization processes become more obvious. These mechanisms will be looked at separately in the next two chapters.

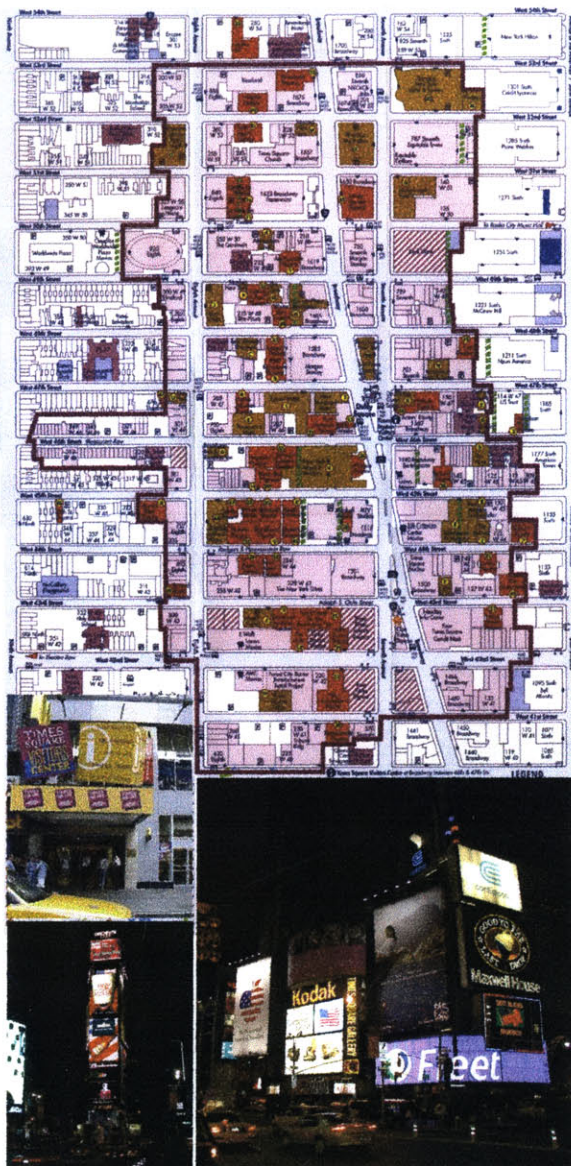


Figure 11: Times Square Business Improvement Districts, New York sets up the visitor center to offer free citywide information from multilingual tourist counselors and free brochures including the BIDs' Map, Restaurant and Entertainment Guides.

Source: Times Square BID's website
<http://www.timessquarebid.org/>

Chapter 3 The Design Mechanism

Introduction

To compete for the businesses and housing markets, downtowns' physical environments must be attractive enough for companies and residents. Like architecture, urban design can be viewed as a problem solving mechanism that is concerned with the implications of layouts of the physical environment for everyday life and experience. Today, we understand that the urban design concerns as much about enhancing social opportunities as enhancing the aesthetic quality of the public realm. However, this was very different 50 years ago.

A Reaction to the 'Death and Life of Cities'

In the 1950s, there was no strong concept of urban design. The closest thing was the federal urban renewal program that was used to solve the problem of blighted central cities. Then, existing cities were demolished and replaced by new developments with undesirable urban environments. These have created awareness in people from various disciplines to:

- a. Think comprehensively about how we carry out physical developments;
- b. Consider what goes between buildings or how buildings should come together; and,
- c. Deal with the streetscape and experience of being in a city.

The Foundation

In response to the awareness, Harvard University launched the first Urban Design Conference in 1956 that led to the launch of an "Urban Design Program" in 1959-60. In the following year, Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch, and Gordon Cullen have separately published their views¹ on this.

Jacob 'attacked CIAM's Modernism and advocated that the Modernist's ideals for "cities in the park" have created publicly un-owned spaces that were main generators of crime. She proposed to resurrect main public space precedents, i.e. to focus on streets and squares, in the design of cities'². Lynch's concept of legibility has 5 basic elements: i.e. paths, districts, edges, nodes, and landmarks. He showed how these elements helped people to form mental maps in the understanding of the city. Cullen's concept of 'serial vision' defined the urban landscape as a series of related spaces and a journey through space and time. His aesthetic approach in the designing of picturesque urban quarters has 'enriched the vocabulary of urban designers'³.

¹ The respective books are 'Death and Life of Great American Cities' (1961), 'The Image of the City' (1961), and 'The Concise Townscape' (1961).

² VELIBEYOGLU, Koray 1999 An article on 'Urban Design in the Postmodern Context' in the website <http://www.angelfire.com/ar/corei/ud.html>

³ ibid.

While Jacob's criticisms and proposals focused more on the software of urban environment, Lynch's and Cullen's discourses focused on the hardware of urban environment. Since Jacob's proposals were relatively more difficult to be engaged in directly for the conception and production of urban environments, the strongest influence were from Lynch and Cullen that had engaged the physical attributes of the environment.

Fundamentally, the term 'urban design' emerged as a bridge to fill the gap between architecture and planning⁴. At one end, architecture deals with the design and production of building or buildings within a defined site. On the other end, planning deals with the disposition of land uses through policy formulation, plan making and development control. Urban design fills the middle ground and addresses how should an assemblage of individual sites look like and what to do with the land between these individual sites. Jon Lang shared this view and wrote that "urban design is concerned with the design of building configurations and the spatial and use relationship between buildings and the spaces created between them. The focus of attention is on organizing and shaping the public realm. Thus, it is concerned with the way open spaces are framed by buildings that have been developed at different times"⁵. The focus on hardware aspects challenged the way architects and planners were directing urban design. Nevertheless, from the 1960s, urban design as a distinct specialty in the United States started to develop rapidly.

Fitting In New Developments (into Existing Downtown)

The rapid development was partly fueled by US cities' efforts to redevelop obsolete docks and the inner city in the 1970s. These cities needed tools to figure out how to stitch these developments into the existing cities' fabric and found their answers in urban design. Most of them focused their attention on the design aspects only. This was not surprising since influential works⁶ by Christopher Alexander, Aldo Rossi and Ian McHarg had cast the discussion of urban design by 1970 on design.

Alexander showed 'that there is a deep and important underlying structural correspondence between the pattern of a problem and the process of designing a physical form which answers that problem'⁷. Rossi discussed the hardware on urban environment based on theoretical and philosophical context by bringing in concepts of 'historicism' and 'collective memory'⁸. McHarg contributed the classic method of landscape analysis in designing human settlements by breaking down a region into its appropriate uses and following nature's morphologies to make clear and comprehensible recommendations and avoid the destructive process of development.

⁴ MCGLYNN, Sue in an article on 'Reviewing the Rhetoric' in Making Better Places: Urban Design Now edited by HAYWARD, Richard and MCGLYNN, Sue for the Joint Center for Urban Design, 1993

⁵ LANG, Jon 1994 Urban Design: The American Experience pp 71 Van Nostrand Reinhold New York

⁶ The respective books are 'Notes on Synthesis of Form' (1964), 'Architecture and the City' (1965) and 'Design with Nature' (1969).

⁷ Alexander, Christopher 1964 Epilogue in Notes on Synthesis of Form Harvard University Press

⁸ VELIBEYOGLU, Koray 1999

More than designing hardware

The practicing urban designers soon found themselves facing new challenges when they embarked on urban design. Firstly, there was a big gap between creating ideas on the drawing board and realizing these ideas on ground. Secondly, the designers who had emphasized on design of physical products found that they had to address the social and perceptual issues surrounding their design. Lastly, there was a rise of many citizen groups with different views and interests on the project wanting to place their concerns and input into it. Designing urban environments became a complex balancing act.

The criticism on the hardware design and awareness of the lack of software and management considerations in urban design were brought up through works of people like Robert Venturi, Oscar Newman, Amos Rapoport, and Yi-Fu Tuan⁹.

Venturi's work was a reaction to the 'ugly and ordinary' urban conditions and 'decorated sheds' in the Las Vegas Strip. He called 'the architects to be more receptive to the tastes and values of "common" people and less immodest in their erections of "heroic," self-aggrandizing monuments'¹⁰.

Newman's contributed the physical design approach to crime prevention by drawing a wide range of planning and design strategies to reassign the perceived ownership of residential space back to the residents. According to him once residents reestablished control of their environment, the criminal would be isolated and his turf removed.

Rapoport's work opened new horizons by bringing views on the ethnology and anthropology of architecture into the built environment. Together with his other works¹¹, he discussed the relationship between people, their behaviors and their built environments, drawing inspiration mostly from the traditional and vernacular human settlements to illustrate how human has traditionally designed their built environment based on the set of their beliefs, culture and close association with the natural environment.

Tuan explored the human experience of space, i.e. 'the ways in which people feel and think about space, how they form attachments to home, neighborhood, and nation, and how feelings about space and place are affected by the sense of time. He suggested that place is security and space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other.'¹² It was unfortunate that only Venturi and Newman's works had much influence in the field just, because it dealt with the physical environment.

⁹ The respective books are 'Learning from Las Vegas' (1972), 'Defensible Space; Crime Prevention through Urban Design' (1973), 'Human Aspects of Urban Form' (1977), and 'Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience' (1977).

¹⁰ Editorial reviews for the book 'Learning from Las Vegas' (1972).

¹¹ His books were 'House, Form and Culture' (1969) and 'The Meaning of Built Environment' (1982, updated in 1990).

¹² Editorial reviews for the book 'Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience' (1977).

Managing Expectations

The 1970s were also characterized with the rise of citizen participation in planning. In most cities, neighbors of new developments often criticized the way developments were designed. Some were guided by the voices of citizen action groups to rise and speak about how they thought the character and quality of large-scale environment should be integrated with their neighborhoods. This turned urban design into a management problem as there was a need to manage additional expectations and concerns.

An example in Boston is the 1971 Boston Urban Associates (BUA)'s proposal to develop six million square feet of mixed-use development next to the Boston Common and Public Garden. This original proposal was met with strong objections not only from the residents of Back Bay and South End, but also others in the city. Although the design would continue the tall spine connecting Prudential with the financial district as imagined by Lynch, the development would "Manhattanize" the historic city, cause high winds, big traffic jams, and seriously damage the Public Garden by casting shadows on the open space. Also, the development would protrude above the trees in the Public Garden when viewed from this major open space.

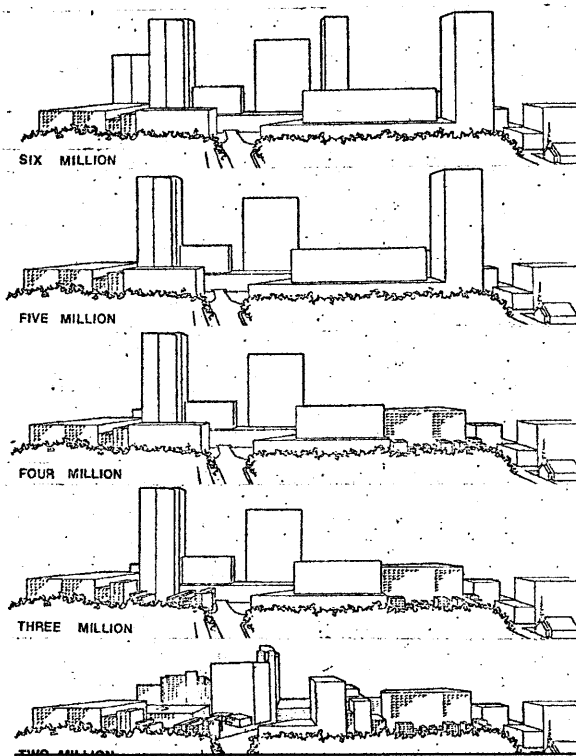


Figure 12: The Park Plaza Project, Boston Civic groups objected to the original proposal. Then, alternatives were developed for discussions. The final design was roughly 3 million square feet.

Source: Case Study on Park Plaza, May 1976

The City of Boston managed the expectations and concerns by setting out a Civic Advisory Council (CAC) and holding public consultation exercises to review, discuss and guide the revised proposals. In the end, the final development was half the size of the original, Boston's urban fabric was maintained and the view from the open spaces preserved.

The final development Heritage in the Garden is one of Boston's finest in terms of its urban design. It fits into the block. The broken-up façade treatment provides an enclosure to the street and open spaces while the stepped back towers provide a relief from urban wall effect. The design also pays attention to pedestrians with its broad sidewalk and activities at ground level.

The development has elements that mimic those already in the city in terms of its scale and proportion, architectural treatments and details like windows and cornice lines,



Figure 13: The Heritage in the Garden, Boston

Source: Architectural Record, May 1989

the materials used like brick, pre-cast concrete and rusticated local limestone, and the streetscape features like double-acorn streetlamps and turquoise awnings.

This development represents one of the successful integration of urban projects in the cities, which reflected the 1980s' ideals to return to the traditional urban forms and developments. Some designers have advocated historic preservation or conservation, while others have attempted to re-interpret and re-invent these ideals, usually by using

modern materials such as concrete, steel, and glass. This influence has its root in the post-modernist movement and in writings of Colin Rowe and Leon Krier¹³.

Re-emphasizing the hardware: Fitting the parts to whole

Both Rowe and Krier were in turn been influenced by Camillo Sitte¹⁴, who had emphasized on the importance for aesthetic quality of city's public realm nearly-one-century-earlier. Sitte in his book 'admired the Medieval and Renaissance forms of the cities and suggested that the remedy [to humanize 'modern' cities] is to return to methods of the medieval town planning'¹⁵.

Similarly, Rowe rejected the grand utopian visions of 'total planning' and 'total design' to propose a method that collaged mini-utopians into the city (whole). Krier used simple and clear graphics to illustrate how to achieve harmonious urban developments through small-scale interventions.

This common theme, to fit the parts into whole was an idea that surfaced time and again in the discussion about designing the hardware of urban environment. Two decades earlier, in one of the important 'manuals'¹⁶ for urban designers, Edmund Bacon observed that the most successful form of cities was found in those that evolved over a period of time with each new layer inserted carefully into the existing fabric and design structures. His main contribution was this 'design structure', a proposal that uses basic design principles and elements to organize and enhance movement of people through space.

¹³ The respective publications are a book titled 'Collage City' (1984) and a presentation on 'Houses, Palaces, Cities' in Architectural Design Profile magazine Issue No.54 (1984).

¹⁴ His book is 'City Planning According to Artistic Principles' (1889).

¹⁵ VELIBEYOGLU, Koray 1999

¹⁶ The book titled 'Design of Cities' was first published in 1967, and has been reprinted many times.

Ten years later, Christopher Alexander wrote in his book titled 'The Timeless Way of Building' (1979) that buildings should grow naturally, rather than be planned and the design of the buildings should involve the people who will to live in them. He observed that successful outcomes often shared similar desirable patterns. The discussion of the desirable patterns was elaborated in book titled 'A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction' (1977). The guide has been developed into a language for design used not only in architecture, urban planning and design, but also in computer science; it has been applied to Object Oriented Programming.¹⁷

Taking a Comprehensive View or Looking at the Big Picture

In tandem with the theme of fitting parts into whole, was the rise of post-modernists' theories in architecture and urbanism. The call was for better integration of new developments into the existing urban fabric by adopting certain look and aesthetics. To achieve this, cities used urban design as a control for the aesthetics of urban environments.

Aesthetic control

Aesthetic control had been established¹⁸ with the Berman vs Parker case (348 US 26 (1954)) and was reinforced by the Penn Central Transportation Co. vs New York City case (438 US (1978) at 129). The US Supreme Court ruled both cases.

In the first case, it 'gave strong support for government action based solely on aesthetic considerations *to say that* the concept of the public welfare is broad and inclusive ... The values it represents are spiritual as well as physical, aesthetic as well as monetary. It is within the power of the legislature to determine that the community should be beautiful as well as healthy, spacious as well as clean, well-balanced as well as carefully patrolled'¹⁹.

In the second, it sought to uphold 'the validity of local landmark protection laws to say '(We) emphasize what is not in dispute ... This court has recognized, in a number of settings that states and cities may enact land-use regulations or controls to enhance the quality of site by preserving the character and the desirable aesthetic features of a city.' Since the mid-1980s, the trend towards accepting aesthetic-based land use regulation has continued and decision holding such regulations are now commonplace'²⁰.

¹⁷ NIKOS A Salingaros 1997 Web-based article titled 'Some Notes on Christopher Alexander' <http://www.math.utsa.edu/sphere/salingar/Chris.text.html>.

¹⁸ Accounted as historical perspective in the American Planning Association's publication titled Aesthetics, Community Character, and the Law by Duerksen and Goebel (pp 5-7). Note that the main reasons were usually fire protection, safety and economics, rather than aesthetic consideration.

¹⁹ Duerksen and Goebel, 1999

²⁰ *ibid*.

The problem of using urban design as a control mechanism, especially to deal with a subjective issue like aesthetic control, is how to find and establish good and reasonable justifications. Older cities like Boston would find the justifications easier as they can invoke certain ideals and principles such as building form, building height, setbacks, characters of development, material and finishes that are well-established in the city.

Since most of the projects were usually single developments that occupied a site within a street block, an entire street block or a few street blocks, they can be conceptualized and designed easily as a single 'missing' piece to fit into the existing urban fabric. Most of the developments since 1980s have reinforced these characters²¹. Such aesthetic control is based on a qualitative approach using the skills of the design review panels or design advisory boards.

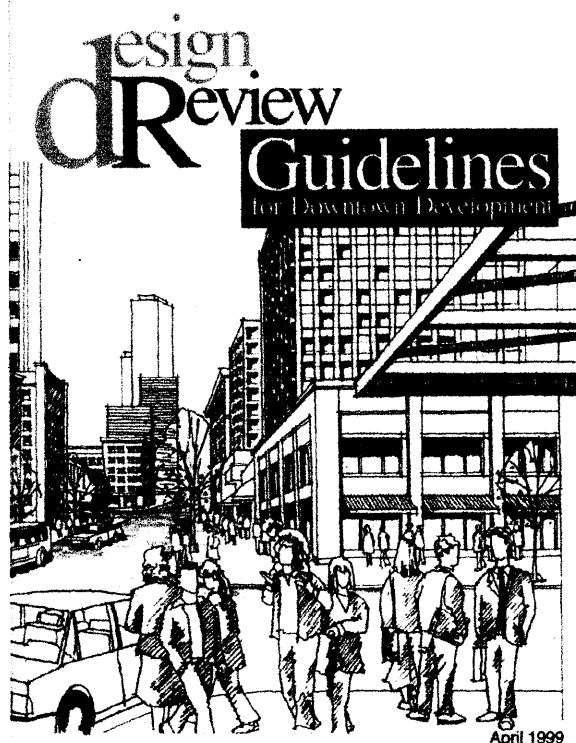


Figure 14: Seattle's Design Review Guidelines
The five concerns that the guidelines addressed are site planning & massing, architectural expression, the streetscape, public amenities and vehicular access & parking.

Source: Department of Design, Construction & Land Use, 1999

A combination of qualitative and quantitative approach to aesthetic control can be found in relatively new cities like Seattle, Portland and San Diego²².

These cities have developed urban design principles and guidelines for the entire city, from downtown to metropolitan areas, to establish good reasons and reasonable justifications to control aesthetics of the urban environments.

Each of these cities has embarked on a more comprehensive approach to urban design by delineating the overall urban form and character that is to be achieved, formulating approaches for specific areas, and specifying strategies to guide individual developments to achieve the 'symbolic expressions' for that area.

As an example, Portland updated its 1972's Downtown Plan to 1988 Central City Plan that limited downtown parking, reinforced use of transit system and improved streetscape.

²¹ Now, Boston is trying to encourage innovation and creativity among the architects in coming out with designs that do not emulate the existing architectural styles but set a new precedent like what the new John Hancock Tower had done.

²² According to John Punter (1999), these cities are among those well known for their urban design principles.

The plan identified key projects and programs with a more precise definition of initiatives, articulated visions and projected clear concepts of design framework for each

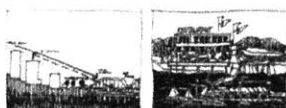
A. PORTLAND PERSONALITY

These guidelines reinforce the existing character of Portland's Downtown and Central Eastside Subdistricts. The guidelines also call for the maintenance of this character as the city expands along the river on the west side and as the Lloyd Center/Coleman Subdistrict redevelops.

A1. Integrate the River

Recognize the river as an important design consideration in projects that are located along or near the edge of the Willamette River. This can be done through means such as the composition of architectural and landscape elements, location of windows, doors and attached outdoor areas, and provision of accessways for the pedestrian to, along, and from the water's edge.

Improve the bridges across the Willamette River for the pedestrian with convenient bridge-head connections, safe and pleasant lighting systems and comfortable walkways in a manner which improves the bridge appearance and facilitates access between Downtown and the Eastside.



A2. Emphasize Portland Themes

Incorporate Portland-related themes into a project design, where appropriate.

A3. Respect the Portland Block Structures

Maintain, and where appropriate, extend the traditional 200-foot block pattern, and preserve the ratio of open space to buildings that it produces.

Where the superblock is employed, locate driveways and pathways in a manner which reflects the traditional block pattern, including elements such as galleries and public passages to accommodate the pedestrian. Locate high-rise structures in a manner which respects the traditional block grid.



The South Park Blocks were established when Portland was founded. New Blocks have been introduced and continue to be used in the City's center. The Central City Plan calls for the creation of new Blocks to achieve a continuous landscaped strip from the South Park Blocks to the Willamette River.

A4. Use Unifying Elements

Strengthen the continuity of the Central City by using existing elements and/or adding new elements that unify and connect individual areas.

A5. Enhance, Embellish and Identify Areas

Enhance the identity of Special Districts by incorporating small scale features that add to the District's identity and ambience. Embellish with elements that build district character and respect district traditions.

A6. Reuse/Rehabilitate/Restore Buildings

Reuse, rehabilitate, and restore buildings and building elements, where appropriate.

A7. Establish and Maintain a Sense of Urban Enclosure

Define public rights-of-way in a manner which creates and maintains a sense of urban enclosure.

A8. Contribute to the Cityscape, the Stage and the Action

Contribute to the cityscape by providing a stage for action. Develop the sidewalk level with as much public use space as possible.

Create frequent views and easy access into internal activity spaces from adjacent sidewalks.

Allow the outside of the building to reflect important internal spatial qualities and activities such as screens, grand entries, office, residential and retail.

A9. Strengthen Gateways

Develop or strengthen gateways at locations identified by the Central City Plan.



Creating a sense of enclosure is an important urban design consideration in the core area. Buildings are required to be built up to the property line and greater height is allowed.

of its eight sub-districts that made up the downtown area; and embraced three-dimensional form, land-use patterns and public space networks.

It was later recast as the Central City Developer's Handbook in 1992 to explain how the plan was related to the zoning code and to compliment the citywide Development Manual.

The document is known for its user-friendliness, as it summarizes the various plans, policies, legal requirements and processes that control development. It is organized in such a way that it takes the developer through the different processes and procedures that constitute the land use development review processes, which parallel the Bureau of Planning procedures to review development applications.

By the late 1980s, most US cities have had some form of urban design program. Each of them either had developed or was developing a set of

policies and standards to guide physical developments, and setting in place a design review system to manage the aesthetics of the urban environment. Also, by then urban design had established as its own discipline where good urban design projects were given its due recognitions.

Recognizing Urban Design

The two most prominent and important awards in urban design were the biennial Rudi Bruner Awards and the Progressive Architecture (PA) Awards for Urban Design.

PA is an important, well-known and influential architectural magazine and it has given out architectural and design awards for a long time. In 1988, Progressive Architecture started a separate category to award urban design projects. The winning entries were usually more 'architectural' as the designers focused on the physical aspects and how they fit into the urban fabric.

Figure 15: Portland: Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines (1992)

Source: PUNTER, John (1999)

Fine-tuning Urban Design

The first Rudi Bruner Awards for urban designs were given in 1987. However, this award at that point in time did not receive significance, prestige and publicity until much later.

The Rudi Bruner Awards were given to projects that were integrated with the physical, social and cultural context. The winning projects adopted a more comprehensive approach to urban design, as they considered not only the importance of design but also how the project was brought about and developed and run, i.e. managed. They recognized the efforts of planners and implementers of the project, not just the designers alone. One important note is that the Rudy Bruner Foundation reviewed and revisited the earlier winning projects in 1995 to examine how well the projects had fared after they were given the awards and what were the new lessons to be learnt.

Learning from the experiences

Learning from experience is important for the past holds valuable lessons. Urban designers can reflect on their experiences and share with others which strategies had worked and which had not.

The pioneers were Bernard Frieden and Lynn Sagalyn who jointly wrote the book titled 'Downtown, Inc.' in 1989. They looked at successful projects in major US cities and in particular 'delves into the inner workings of the exciting new public entrepreneurship and public-private partnerships that have revitalized these downtowns'²³.

Since then, there were many efforts to study and record the development of the US cities and the experiences of carrying out urban design and developments. In the mid 1990s, there were Jon Lang, Jonathan Barnett and Roberta Brandes Gratz²⁴.

Lang traced the development of urban design experience by looking at the development of cities since the "City Beautiful" movement and by examining the urban design efforts within the social-political context. He proposed a design methodology that would create optimal urban environments. Barnett showed that there were the development opportunities for the bypassed inner city areas and at the metropolitan edges. He concluded that when 'urban design is about designing the city without designing the buildings,' the act could help to repair the environment and communities. Gratz recounted and analyzed the success stories about rejuvenated neighborhoods and resurgent business districts across America. She provided an understanding of not only how to avoid repeating terrible mistakes of the past, but also how to recover from them.

²³ Editorial reviews for the book.

²⁴ The books are 'Urban Design: The American Experience' (1994) by Lang, 'The Fractured Metropolis: Improving the New City, Restoring the Old City, Reshaping the Region' (1995) and 'The Elusive City: Five Centuries of Design, Ambition and Miscalculation' (1996) by Barnett and 'The Living City: How America's Cities Are Being Revitalized by Thinking Small in a Big Way' (1995) by Gratz.

At the turn of the century, Roberta Brandes Gratz & Norman Mintz, Jerold Kayden and Lynn Sagalyn published their works²⁵. Drawing on their firsthand observations of downtown changes, Gratz and Mintz provided a unique perspective on the state of urban development and the resulting quality of life. They identified a flexible, effective approach to urban rejuvenation and offered specific guidelines for change and revitalization. Kayden looked at the result of New York's 39-year experience in zoning incentives to promote and produce more than 500 plazas, parks, and atriums located on private property yet by law accessible to and usable by the public. It showed the problems and possibilities inherent in the design and management of the publicly owned private spaces. Sagalyn presented the most detailed and comprehensive study on the development of Times Square.

Projecting the future and making it happen

There are efforts by some to not only learn from the past, but also to think ahead into the future and search for utopia. This 'futuristic' thinking and search for utopia is not a new phenomenon. Urban design arose as result of the reaction to CIAM's manifesto and Modernist's utopian image for an ideal city. However, the 1990's projections were not the same as those in the 1960s. The proposals were grounded with better understanding of the cities and most urban designers had had experience of working with cities. Instead of setting out new ideals and engaged in the making of a brave new world, the writers²⁶ like Peter Calthorpe, Andre Duany & Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Peter Katz²⁷ applied lessons learnt from the last 30 years to perfect the making of the American dream. These works were the foundation stones for the New Urbanist movement called the Congress for New Urbanism.



Figure 16: Celebration, Florida

The official website described the concept as "Take the best ideas from the most successful towns of yesterday and the technology of the new millennium, and synthesize them into a close-knit community that meets the needs of today's families. The founders of CELEBRATION started down a path of research, study, discovery, and enlightenment that resulted in one of the most innovative communities of the 20th century."

Source: Celebration's website <http://www.celebrationfl.com/>

²⁵ The respective books are 'Cities Back from the Edge: New Life for Downtown' (2000), 'Publicly Owned Private Space' (2000) and 'Times Square Roulette' (2001).

²⁶ The respective books are 'The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community and the American Dream' (1993), 'Sustainable Communities: A New Design Synthesis for Cities, Suburbs, and Towns' (1991), and 'The New Urbanism: Toward an Architecture of Community' (1994).

²⁷ Katz also initiated and co-edited a comprehensive statement of sustainable community-building practices called The Ahwahnee Principles (1991), which has since been adopted by over 120 California cities and counties.

*The Congress for New Urbanism*²⁸

This urban design movement called Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) burst onto the scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The movement has a seminal document called the Charter of the New Urbanism. It aims was to reform all aspects of real estate development by affecting regional and local plans through their involvement in new, urban retrofits, and suburban infill development. Their strategies included reining in urban sprawl and supporting regional planning for open space, making sure that neighborhoods were walkable and contain a diverse range of housing and jobs, increasing affordable housing supply and balancing development of jobs and housing with historic restoration, reducing the time spent in traffic, and creating safe streets and green building. These strategies made them the champions for Transit Oriented Developments and Smart Growth.

Controlling the future (development) for sustainability

CNU was founded at a time when many cities had developments taking place on new and natural areas while the older parts in the developed areas were abandoned. This situation posed a long-term sustainability problem and evoked concerns of uneconomical and undesirable increase in the consumption of natural resources. Transit Oriented Developments and Smart Growth were adopted as strategies to address long-term sustainability and reverse the trend toward urban sprawl and congestion.

Transit Oriented Developments (TOD)

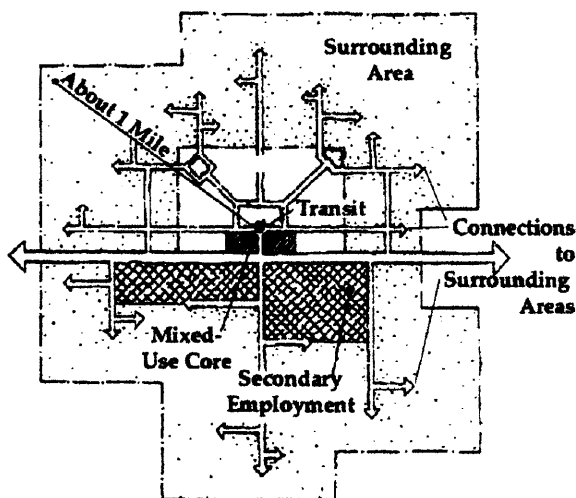


Figure 17: Transit Oriented Development Concept sketches

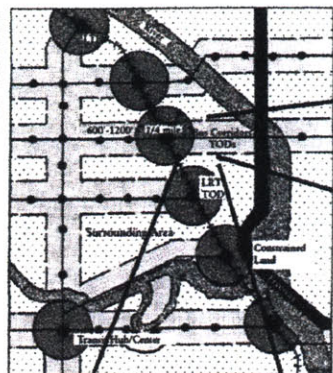
Sources: St. Paul Metropolitan Council, 2000

This is one direction of urban design where the idea is to create transit facilities usually a transportation hub or transit stops, and use them as the focus of mixed-use development. Many US cities are adopting this strategy because of the economic, social and environmental benefits brought about by its important features such as: -

- a. The transportation hub should be integrated with the different uses e.g. living, shopping and workplaces to reduce the need driving;
- b. The greatest density is located close to the transit stops making it convenient for residents to take advantage of transit alternatives and engage in the differing activities;

²⁸ Edited from the descriptions found in the homepages of Congress of New Urbanism website: www.cnu.org/about/index.cfm

This graphic shows an interconnected network of bus corridor and light rail station TODs. The bus corridor TODs are shown as 1,200 feet (2 or 3 city blocks) on either side of high-frequency bus routes, but the distance can vary. The light rail TODs extend up to 1/4 mile from the transit station.



This graphic is a close-up of the 1/4 mile radius TODs in the figure above it. In this case, the TOD extends on both sides of the light rail tracks; in many situations, the tracks, an arterial street, or other barrier may necessitate a "one-sided" TOD. A mix of uses clusters around the station, with residential and/or employment uses making up the remainder of the TOD.

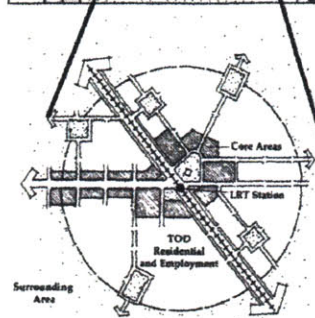


Figure 18: Smart Growth
Based on Transit Oriented Development

Source: St. Paul Metropolitan Council, 2000

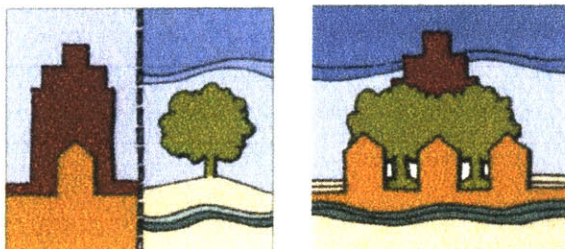


Figure 19: Smart Growth?
Efforts should be made to reintegrate the currently isolated natural and built environments (left), creating a unique and healthy urban ecology (right).

Source: St. Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework, 1999

- c. The transit stops should provide good connections for users to change between different modes of transportation and a safe, pleasant and comfortable environment for pedestrians;
- d. The pedestrian and vehicular conflicts are reduced by having lower parking-to-occupant ratios, shared parking, requiring parking to be placed behind buildings, and minimizing parallel parking on-street; and,
- e. The environment should have a neighborly character with small blocks, less private open space and more public open space, narrow streets and wider sidewalks with street lights and trees provided to create a pedestrian scale.

Smart Growth

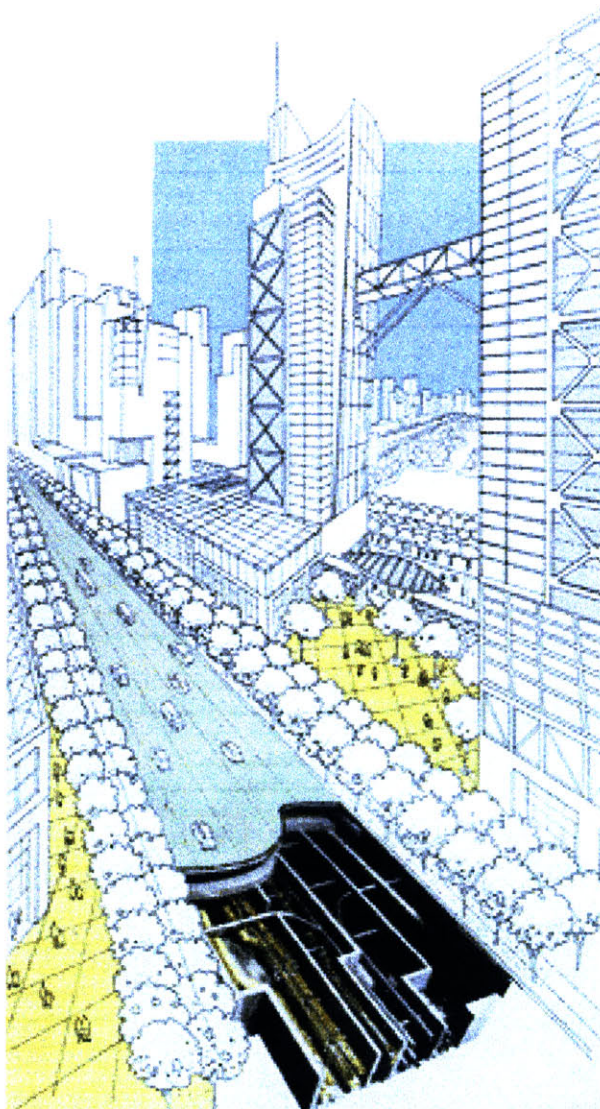
The Smart Growth strategy applied TOD at a bigger scale and focused on managing the current development patterns called 'sprawl'.

'The features that distinguish smart growth in a community vary from place to place. In general, smart growth invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. New smart growth is more town-centered, is transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial and retail uses. It also preserves open space and many other environmental amenities. But there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution. Successful communities do tend to have one thing in common--a vision of where they want to go and of what things they value in their community--and their plans for development reflect these values.'²⁹

²⁹ Text from executive summary of Why Smart Growth: A Primer by International City/County Management Association with Geoff Anderson, 7/98. Quoted from the 'Smart Growth Online - A Service of the Smart Growth Network' website <http://www.smartgrowth.org/about/overview.asp>.

Using Technology

Much literatures³⁰ in the 1990s and 2000 discussed and proposed designs for sustainability from the environmental and ecological point of views. However, looking at environment and ecology is not the only response from the urban designers to the issue of sustainability.



There are others who responded by looking at the impact of technology on the look of future downtowns. However, most of them discussed the influence of the latest technology on contemporary living and attempt to imagine possible future homes and work places. Unlike CNU, there is no set of urban design principles and guidelines that can be put into practice.

Perhaps the real innovations using technology and urban design to affect urban environment are being carried out not in the US but in cities in Japan, Singapore and China. These cities have carried out comprehensive planning to integrate comprehensive infrastructure for services and technology with the physical developments. In these cities, common services tunnel houses not only electrical networks but also telecommunication networks. The main idea is to ensure that there is no need to dig up the road to put in, update, and replace new infrastructure every now and then.

Figure 20: Singapore – Common Services Tunnel (CST)

CSTs are purpose-built underground tunnels that house utility service lines such as water pipes, power cables and telecommunications. Singapore is the second Asian country after Japan and the first in Southeast Asia to implement a comprehensive CST system.

Source: The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore website <http://www.uragov.sg/>

³⁰ A listing is provided in <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/smartgrowth/greenbuilding/resources.html>, the Maryland Green Building Network website titled 'Maryland Green Building Program: Green Building Information'. This is a part of resources provided by the Maryland's Green Building Information Resource Center (MGBIRC).

The public-private partnership

An important aspect about these works is that urban development and certainly urban design is no longer considered as solely the act of designing the hardware. Urban designers at the turn of the new century are aware that they have to engage with the social, economic and political factors. The software aspect has become an integral part of urban design. But it takes a reaction from the people outside of the profession to show the importance of truly engaging with the management aspects as well.

Urban design is not about the design professionals alone nor about a single party, i.e. public sector laying out plans and visions for the area. It is about how to get an important idea realized to optimize the opportunity for redevelopment by creating for the downtown residents and businesses, an attractive place to live, work, play and learn, while maximizing growth and profit for the downtown and making sure that they do not lose out to competition.

Engaging and involving stakeholders

In the 1990s, urban design concern not only overlapped city planners, landscape architects and architects but also the owners, developers and businessmen, who formed the stakeholders. In the past, uncoordinated growth and allowing individual owners to reap incentives gave rise to bad urban forms, such as those privately owned public spaces in New York, and pedestrian vehicular conflicts. These bad urban forms have kept and turned customers away.

The stakeholders realized that there was a need to co-ordinate the downtown developments by using urban design to guide downtowns' growth and gave downtowns a more efficient layout, when vehicular access and the provision of pedestrian friendly environment were carefully thought of, designed and implemented. They were aware that they have to play a greater role in shaping the public realm as they strived to maximize their own benefits. They saw the benefits of using urban design as the tool to negotiate with the local government and the public for more density and height. They also saw that they could advance their projects faster when they use urban design as a forum to get everybody to agree to the development proposal. They also saw that good urban design would help them to promote and market the area, which would in turn attract and bring in more customers.

A good example is the Retail Core in Downtown Seattle where the streets are now highly pedestrian friendly. Vehicular accesses into developments are located on streets parallel to the ground contours and shoreline, while most developments have their main pedestrian access taken from streets perpendicular to the ground contours and shoreline. Furthermore, the remarkable thing is not only due to the beautiful urban environment that was guided by urban design guidelines but the activities that took place in the downtown. The downtown, through the effort of Downtown Seattle Association, has programmed a series of activities and events on the streets throughout the year.

There are at least two major parades on the same route. The Seafair Parade takes place in the evening at the end of July, while the Bon Marche Parade takes place in the morning the day after the Thanksgiving Day.

The latter is a part of a clever retailing strategy to get families to come down for the parade, and hang around the Retail Core while waiting for the Christmas Light-Up by the Westlake Center and Bon Marche that takes place on the same evening. In between, families would shop, eat and watch movies. The open space in front of Westlake Center and the design of Westlake Center with its balcony provide the setting and stage for Christmas Light-Up presentation. Both of these features were guided and achieved through urban design plans.



Figure 21: Seattle's Parades

A and B: The Seafair Parade on 28 July 2001

C, D and E: The Bon Marche Parade on 23 November 2001

Positioning Strategy

The Seattle example shows that stakeholders have realized that there is a need to integrate the physical environment with their own programs and initiatives. Downtowns are usually made up of many different environment and enclaves. When there are similar environments, downtowns would need to look at how to differentiate one environment from another with various programs and functions. There is a need to develop a positioning and marketing for the different areas in order to generate a variety of



Figure 22: Seattle's Christmas tree-lighting
In the evening of 23 November 2001, the crowds gathered in front of Westlake Center to watch performances on the balcony of the shopping center before the Christmas tree and the Bon Star was lighted up.

Source: The Seattle Times

environments and sustain consumers' interests. This can be achieved by using urban design. Through it, downtowns can differentiate many smaller environments, look at how to position programs and functions for the different environments to generate and sustain consumers' interests.

Conclusion

In summary, urban design has been used to create symbolic expressions for the city (hardware) and to develop a variety of urban environments, spaces and activities (software). These are done to generate and sustain the interest of people, residents as well as businesses and to serve as 'entertainment centers' that provide adequate amount of retail outlets, shopping centers, restaurants, entertainment venues, theaters and museums with each function and place clearly delineated. Urban design has also been used as a tool to identify, maintain and build upon the assets of environments, such as historical buildings, important spaces, view corridors, key features and qualities of area, objects, activities and thematic elements.

The scope of urban design is large and complex. It needs an assemblage of players to get the job done. It needs cooperation from all the parties involved. Who or which organization is the ideal

institution to carry out and co-ordinate the urban design works? What is the ideal strategy to coordinate and manage this task? These management issues will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 The Managing Mechanism

Introduction

The urban design matrix shows a range of works that consist of designing the hardware and software and managing the hardware and software. Based on the last chapter, urban design is no longer about designing hardware. It has to include, if not already, the design of software and the management of hardware and software. While certain functions can be performed by the public sector, others would be too expensive, especially when the public sector has no or dwindling fund. It can look towards the private sector to help out financially and develop a relationship with the private sector to provide public benefits. Some downtowns have set up an institution in the form of public-private partnership to manage the expectation and delivery of public services. This institutional set up is largely a North American phenomenon.

Background

Public Sector Initiatives

The institutions set up as non-governmental organizations to carry out the downtown revitalization are referred to as downtown development authority, development corporations, center city corporations or urban development corporations. Although these institutions may receive some form of public money, they do not have the authority of a public organization to levy taxes or condemn land by eminent domain. A few of these institutions have seen their roles increased to serve the downtown, even though they were initially set up to facilitate single public-private partnership developments. An example is the Centre City Development Corporation in San Diego, whose roles now include strategic planning and urban design.

Private Sector Initiatives

In the 1950s, the concept of special tax assessment area initiated the private sector to set up special assessment district. This was a 'simple, convenient and practical way to raise money for a single downtown improvement like parking lot or to fund a marketing campaign.'¹ At the beginning of 1960s, the concept expanded in response to the new definition of 'property management. [It] meant that owners and businesses had to provide high quality environment and maintain middle-class standards for both inside and outside of their commercial establishments, and wherever the environment affects guest, an employee, or a customer'². Funds were gathered to share the maintenance cost.

¹ ALEXANDER, Laurence A (Editor) 1986 Downtown Improvement Districts: Creating Money and Power for Downtown Action Downtown Research & Development Center New York

² HOUSTON, Lawrence O. Jr. 1997 BIDs: Business Improvement Districts Urban Land Institute in corporation with International Downtown Association Washington, D.C.

By 1965, the first improvement district was developed in Ontario. Alex Ling, a merchant in Toronto's Bloor West Village organized business interests to counter the threat from a giant shopping mall by getting the owners to tax themselves and make the commercial area work successfully. At this stage, these institutions were 'do-it yourself creatures of business and municipal co-operation; they usually dealt at arm's length with state legislatures that lacked transferable statutory models and trust in local discretion'³. It is only later that BIDs⁴ were carefully designed to fit into a complete package of downtown management tools by the downtown leaders and grew into the downtowns management structures. This happened 'when federal aid and city services are lost; when the American standard of acceptable commercial environments changed drastically over twenty years; and, when the business leaders in older commercial areas recognized that something must be done to maintain and enhance their competitive position.'⁵

In the US, the first assessment-financed BIDs was the Downtown Development District in New Orleans, legislated in 1975 in response to 'a series of challenges confronting the central business district, including a decision by the US Department of Transportation not to finance a desired interstate highway'⁶. Most of the BIDs that formed between then and the mid 1980s had limited powers and did not have much importance or influence since they provide supporting services like maintenance and security.

BIDs gained its importance and emerged as influential institutions in the 1990s due to two factors. The first has to do with federal assistance and the second has to do with their function and roles. In the past federal assistance was devoted to redevelopment and had little to do with downtown management. But in the 1990s, federal aid was given for streetscape improvements (including pedestrian lighting, paving, and new trees), for social services for homeless and other street people, and to employ beat patrol officers. This gave BIDs power and importance. Their functions and roles grew as the focus of downtown planning and urban design shifted from the local governments to the hands of these institutions. BIDs could determine the image of downtown environments that they wanted to create and promote and carry out urban planning and urban design.

Today, 'an improvement district combines the financing vehicle of assessment districts ... with additional administrative powers, such as planning, maintenance, and promotion of improvements or downtown activities.'⁷ Thus, it is not surprising that today, urban design is figured prominently in such institutions and it is used as an important tool to revitalize and promote growth in downtowns. The local government can then focus their limited resources to concentrate on planning at macro scale and leave the area planning to individual BIDs.

³ ibid.

⁴ This term will be used although the institutions are called business assistance district, business improvement zone, downtown improvement districts, downtown associations, special services districts, special improvement districts, or business improvement districts (BIDs).

⁵ Houston, 1997

⁶ ibid.

⁷ MCBEE, Susanna et al 1992 Downtown Development Handbook 2nd Edition Washington DC ULI- the Urban Land Institute pp63

However, each downtown has organized its BIDs to cater to its own peculiar needs, for there are many issues influencing the initiation, organization or operation of BIDs that require state laws to take significantly different approaches in the BIDs formations. Besides procedural issues, such as public notice and assessment collection, they include the way that the BID would be adopted, the amount of control the government has over it, how it is to be run, how it is funded, and which parties have to pay and which party benefits.

Similarly, depending on the need of a downtown, there can be a range of collaborations between the public and private sectors. Laurence Alexander⁸ in 1987 highlighted 24 different scenarios on 'how downtowns organize for results'. But what are the similarities and differences between the public sector initiatives and private sector initiatives?

Common Features

In both initiatives, the institutional set up must be based on a legal framework. In order for them to be able to solve downtown problems, maintain downtowns wealth and promote downtowns' economic developments, they are given certain powers to carry out and ensure that the objectives are met. As such, these institutions have a smattering of municipal-type powers within its boundaries, which gives them a special purpose and a form of 'local government'. However, the amount of power varies depending on the state and the purpose of the set up.

The institutions are usually apolitical organizations. They represent the interest of various parties although they can either be initiated by the local government or by the private sector. As they act as bridges between the public sector and the stakeholders⁹, they have to be apolitical. However, it does not stop them from adopting advocacy roles for certain development issues pertaining to the direction of downtown growth. Sometimes an advocacy group is formed as a second, BID-related organization independent of city hall that advocates vigorously on behalf of their members' collective business interest.

The institutions can be organized as a non-profit or for-profit organization that comes under the public sector, private sector, or quasi-government influences. Most of the time, they are organized to have non-profit status so that they can enjoy the following advantages:

- a. The donations to the corporation would be tax deductible;
- b. They could apply for and receive aid under federal and state programs;
- c. They would serve as an open forum to resolve common problems; and,
- d. For BIDs, they need to be responsive to the needs of downtown since its funding would largely depend on local merchants and business people.

⁸ ALEXANDER, Laurence A (Editor) 1987 How Downtowns Organize for Results: 24 Case Studies
Downtown Research & Development Center New York

⁹ Used to represent the owners, residents and the businesses in an area.

On the other hand, a non-profit organization would find that their recommendations and programs do not have the force of law. They could not issue bonds, condemn land, force improvements to be made, or force improvements to conform to the site plan and design criteria handbook. Thus, some downtowns establish more than one organization¹⁰; where one would co-ordinate or mastermind the entire program for downtown, and others are precisely structured to accomplished specific goals.

The institutions are usually self-sufficient organizations. They have to operate within budget and fiscal constraints; thus, they have to be financially self-reliant and self-sufficient. Both would pay for action deemed necessary without going through the normal city channels. They could receive funds from the following sources: -

- a. Property taxation;
- b. Leasing of land, facilities or air-rights;
- c. Gifts and donations, and,
- d. Government funds in direct, joint, or parallel programs.

Differences

While the public initiatives could only receive their funds from the sources stated above, the private initiatives could receive (additional) funds from the following sources:

- a. Benefit assessment taxation, tax increment financing, business license or sales-type tax overrides;
- b. Sale of general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, anticipation notes and similar instruments and qualify for tax exempt status; and,
- c. Operating revenue producing activities including customer-type services – parking, restaurants etc.; and,
- d. An assessment tax rate paid by properties and/or businesses within a legally constituted district to cover the cost of providing facilities or services for which the district has a particular need.

The last was provided under the General Improvement and Assessment Law (KKSA 12-6a01 et.seq.). It allowed the property owners and merchants to band together and use the city's tax collection powers to 'assess'¹¹ themselves. This additional funding, especially through the assessment method, is the major difference between the initiatives.

¹⁰ For example, 'there will be (a) a blue-ribbon committee or council to bring the movers and shakers together to formulate overall downtown policy and to nail down key decisions; (b) downtown district to manage specific functions funded through the district assessment; (c) downtown association to operate other functions, notably marketing, that don't fit into the district structure; and (d) a downtown development group to plan, package and facilitate real estate development.' - ALEXANDER, 1987

¹¹ Hence, the tax collection is called special assessment. It is defined as 'a compulsory charge on a selected property for a particular improvement or service which presumably benefits the owners of the selected property and is also undertaken in the interests of the public,' or 'compulsory levies imposed upon owners of property for the purpose of defraying the cost of specific public improvements likely to enhance the value of assessed property characteristics.' - ALEXANDER, 1987

Where an assessment tax rate is applied, the private sector initiatives have to make sure that they use a reasonable and equitable assessment method¹². The common ones are based upon assessed valuation or percentage of taxes due or square footage or street frontage or location or business use or a combination of these choices. The assessment funds can either be collected by the private sector initiatives or together with property taxes that are usually collected by the local government and returned in their entirety to the private sector initiatives. The funds can be used to acquire real estate property, purchase supplemental services¹³ and carry out capital improvements¹⁴ beyond those services and improvements provided by the city.

The second difference is with regard to the ownership of and control over the projects. The public sector initiatives either own the land or buy it from the market. As such they have absolute influence over the way the future development is to be constructed. In contrast, the landowners represented in the BIDs are largely the private sectors.

The third difference is on the approach. The public sector initiatives still have the top-down mentality. Often the institutions prepare the plans and guidelines for developments and later perform the role of the regulator to guide developments. They would carry out negotiations with the potential developers, when needed. The private sector initiatives have a bottom-up approach since they would exercise local democracy and benefit from strategic planning.

The last difference is on the functions. The public sector initiatives are usually set out with definitive objectives to carry out physical development. Often, they played the 'traditional' role of the local government since they are the privatized arms of the functions. To provide a comprehensive package of services and to delve deeply into the urban design processes, they often need to work with other agencies. In these cases, a separate institution, i.e. usually a BID would be set up to provide the supplementary services. However, this set up lacks the rigor and structural efficiency that is achieved by having one agency provide the services all under one roof. The private initiatives' objectives usually deal with and relatively, seldom far beyond the provision of safe and clean services and marketing. However, the private sector initiatives are changing their strategies after noticing that the most successful ones, like those in Denver and Times Square have combined the provision of these non-controversial services with the mission of an agent for change.

¹² The assessment for the financing system must be affordable and equitable, i.e. it must be proportionate to the benefits received and make sure that all who benefit must share costs. This will help to lower down the cost each has to pay. There assessment must provide a continuous or a streamline of positive revenues; and, this system must lead to significant business sector responsibility for the quality of the downtown's public environment and its effective functioning.

¹³ For example, maintenance, sanitation, security, promotions and special events

¹⁴ To improve the conditions of streets and sidewalks; to provide street furniture and special lighting; to landscape streets and parking lots with trees and perennial plants; to provide parks, playgrounds and recreational facilities, and to build retaining walls on public ways or land adjacent to public ways.

Summary

Based on the above comparison, we can see why the concept of downtown improvement districts would be more important and appealing. The concept provides for strategic planning in a local democratic setting with the power to make plans for their own future and to work out programs for the execution of those plans, as well as the power to implement the plan with their own money ¹⁵.

BIDs are the downtown unifying tool that brings together downtown interests to plan, decide, finance and execute programs that would help solve downtowns' problems. It puts planning in the hands of the people directly involved and impacted by the programs. By acting collectively, the business leaders can develop and promote unified positions on matters that affect the local economy, and correct as many problems that affect their economic self-interest. And, they are using their own funds to do it, often paying top dollars for managers who can combine business aggressiveness with professional techniques and diplomacy.

The concept is close to the shopping center concept, where unitary management, absence of fragmented property ownership, ability to assess (through rent or through special assessment) for repairs, expansion of parking, snow removal, modernization, air conditioning, promotion and other task, gave the centers great strengths.

"BIDs have often proved more effective than governments in part because they can operate without bureaucracies, entrenched interests, electoral calculations or even ideology. They offer the virtues of the private sector without corrupting the influences of the profit motive. And yet, BIDs are ... controlled by property owners who finance them and largely make up their boards. The public, in effect, has to depend on the BID's sense of enlightened self-interest."

New York Times
Sunday November 29 1994

Today, more and more BIDs are being organized and launched to undertake downtown works. There are more than 1,000 BIDs across the US¹⁶ and 30,000 'special districts' in the US¹⁷. They perform a wide range of works, spearheading more activities and much more diverse projects. The more ambitious visions go beyond merely making downtown acceptable to current users. They are directed at making downtown attractive to visitors, those with time and money to pursue leisure activities in settings such as Rouse Company's festival marketplaces, the Disney enterprises, or Manhattan's Lincoln Center.

¹⁵ ALEXANDER, Laurence has grouped them as 4Ms – management, mind, muscle and money.

¹⁶ HARDING, David Business Improvement Districts Revitalize New York Reproduced on the website <http://www.publicnet.co.uk/publicnet/fe990528.htm> by permission of Public Finance -The business weekly of the public sector <http://www.publicfinance.co.uk>

¹⁷ HOUSTON, Lawrence O. Jr. 1997 BIDs: Business Improvement Districts Urban Land Institute in corporation with International Downtown Association Washington, D.C. pp.9

BIDs Functions and the Urban Design Framework

What are the typical roles and functions of these successful private sector initiatives? Houston recorded in the Urban Land Institute (ULI) publication on ‘BIDs: Business Improvement Districts’ that Richard Bradley, former International Downtown Associations had highlighted 10 typical BIDs functions. These are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: 10 Typical Functions of Business Improvement Districts

	FUNCTIONS	DESCRIPTIONS
1	Visioning	Developing a vision or strategic plan
2	Formulate & implement urban design	Developing urban design guidelines; managing façade improvement programs
3	Public space regulation	Managing sidewalk vending, street performances, street furniture, code compliance, vehicle loading and unloading
4	Parking and transportation management	Managing the public parking system; maintaining transit shelter; operating ridesharing programs
5	Capital improvements	Installing pedestrian-scale lighting and street furniture; planting and maintaining trees
6	Consumer marketing	Producing festivals and events; coordinating sales promotions; producing maps and newsletters; launching image enhancement and advertising campaigns; erecting directional signage
7	Business recruitment and retention	Conducting market research; producing data-oriented reports; offering financial incentives for new and expanding businesses; marketing to investors
8	Maintenance	Collecting rubbish, removing litter and graffiti, washing sidewalks, shoveling snow, cutting grass, trimming trees, planting flowers in public places
9	Security	Hiring supplementary security and street ‘guides’ or ‘ambassadors’; buying and installing electronic security or special police equipment
10	Social services	Creating or aiding the homeless, job training and youth services programs

Roughly, the first set of five functions deals with the physical environment (hardware) and the second set of five functions deals with activities and programs (software). These functions could be placed into the urban design framework (Table 3).

Table 3: Sorting BIDs' Functions into the Urban Design Framework

	Design	Management
Hardware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing a vision or strategic plan; - Developing urban design guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Installing pedestrian-scale lighting and street furniture; planting and maintaining trees; - Managing sidewalk vending, street performances, street furniture, code compliance, vehicle loading and unloading; - Managing the public parking system; maintaining transit shelter; operating ridesharing programs; - Erecting directional signage; - Managing façade improvement programs.
Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Producing festivals and events; producing maps and newsletters; launching image enhancement and advertising campaigns; - Creating or aiding help-the-homeless, job training and youth services programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collecting rubbish, removing litter and graffiti, washing sidewalks, shoveling snow, cutting grass, trimming trees, planting flowers in public places; - Hiring supplementary security and street 'guides' or 'ambassadors'; buying and installing electronic security or special police equipment. - Coordinating sales promotions; - Conducting market research; producing data-oriented reports; offering financial incentives for new and expanding businesses; marketing to investors.

"BIDs are fundamentally place-management, place-marketing and place-development organizations. We start with clean and safe services, caring for public environment. Then we promote what we have and later expand to produce our own festivals and events. Then we begin to understand that what we have is not enough to draw the customers needed to fill the empty buildings and spaces. Then BIDs begin economic development activities, finding new uses for buildings, retaining and attracting businesses, undertaking strategic planning and visioning, and initiating public spatial capital improvements to leverage more private investment."

- Paul Levy, Director of Philadelphia Center City BID
(Houston, 1997 pp.57)

An Analysis

The urban design framework offers a way to approach urban design in a comprehensive manner. The danger of having a model is to think that it is the ONLY way to do things or apply it without some form of discrimination. Similarly, while the thesis has described in detail the positive points of the public-private partnership institutions, there are as many, if not more negative points in having these organizations that need to be looked out for. The following table compares the advantages and disadvantages for having these institutions.

Table 6: Advantages and Disadvantages of Institutional Structure

	The Advantages	The Disadvantages
1	The institution becomes an agent to bridge the interest and needs of both the public and private sectors with the benefits of acting independently.	It does not mean that everybody's interest and needs would be address by setting up the institutions.
2	The institution would manage the area like managing a mega-shopping center. There would be more coordinated efforts and ensure a better success rate of implementation.	The institution might be very selective in its selection and retaining of 'tenants'. It would then become undemocratic.
3		There is no chance for an unwilling participant to withdraw itself from the institution without withdrawing itself from the area. Those who did not want to be part of the institution might suffer the consequences of non-involvement.
4	The institution offers a 'one-stop-shop' service that formulates, drafts, implements and regulates plans and programs.	
5	The institution would have more funds since it collects 'taxes' from the stakeholders and could seek funding from federal programs.	The additional 'taxes' might be passed on to the customers through higher prices. It could make the area less competitive.
6	Areas with institutions can afford to pay for extra services or better quality services.	Areas that have the institutions would get richer and enjoy better services, while those do not would only get the basic services; and poorer neighborhood might get poorer or worse services. This can result in a disparity in services between areas with these institutions and poorer neighborhoods.

	The Advantages	The Disadvantages
7	In downtowns where such institutions exist, the local governments can afford to take a more macro or broader view on the long-term needs of the downtown and address the challenges it faced.	The city would take a complacency attitude and felt that it need not actively provide public goods and services or they might delegate and cut down on their responsibilities.
8	They could focus their energy to set long term objectives and goals on other matters and projects.	The local government would be in danger of losing the influence on what is the right thing to do for the area. For example, should the urban design guidelines still be the responsibilities of the public sector or should it be delegated to the organizations.
9	When there are many institutions within a city, the city could reorganize the different smaller business improvement districts into one; e.g. the Downtown Seattle Association helped to organize the different smaller business improvement districts to form the Metropolitan Business Improvement District. The smaller BIDs have a larger pool of resources and could buy services that they previously could not afford.	The local government might have to mediate between the various institutions and their interests when there is more than one institution within the city.
10	When an implementation is successful, it would bring in more people and business into the city; therefore increasing the tax collection to the downtown; and henceforth making downtown richer.	
11		The institutions might become too powerful as they have the money and support from the stakeholders. The mayor and the local government might have less clout in the downtown since the richer institutions can plan and do what they think is right.

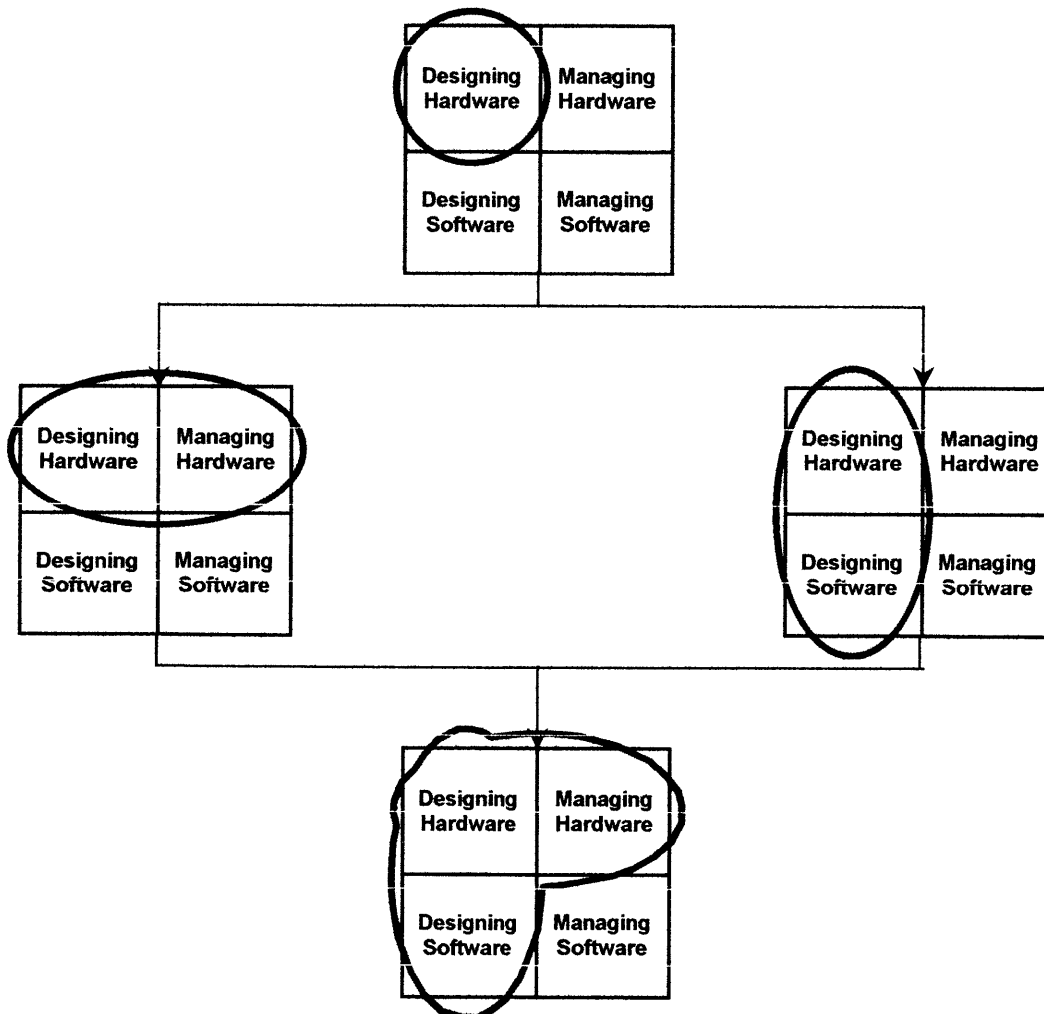
It is important to keep in mind that the proposal is only a useful framework to get things started, the real world is much more complex. Downtown is complex because different downtowns have different needs. Each downtown has a different political system, group dynamics or social capital, historical background that predisposes the way certain things work. For example, Providence did not adopt the proposal for a non-profit agency because the public sector did not want to lose the power that it was holding.

Chapter 5 The Mechanisms and Urban Design Framework

Development of Design Mechanism

Chapter 3 narrated how urban design as a design mechanism has evolved from its founding in 1956. In the beginning, urban design focused on the design of the physical environments, i.e. designing hardware. Two directions were formed as it developed. One group focused on the process as they dealt with the urban development. They were concerned with the design and management of projects, i.e. how to achieve an aesthetically pleasing project that fit into the urban context as well as being profitable. They were concerned with the design and management of the hardware. The other group stressed on developing a total urban environment, i.e. by thinking of it as a product that consisted of hardware and software and designing it as such. By the 1990s, the two groups' concerns merged as they saw the importance of each other's approaches. The urban designers knew that they also have to focus on managing the hardware and designing the software.

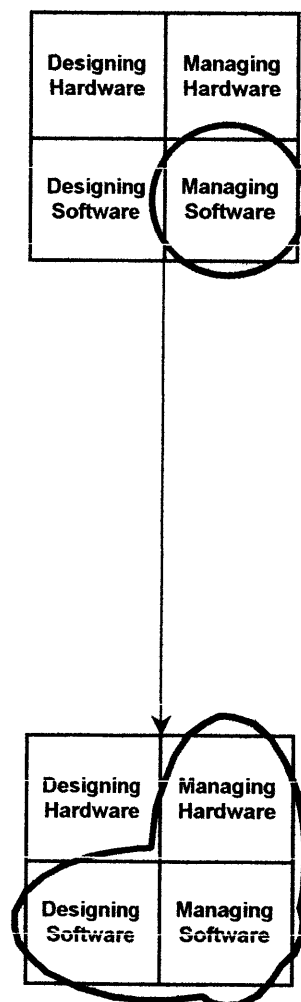
Figure 23: Development of the Design Mechanism



Development of Managing Mechanism

Once institutions such as the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) were only providing maintenance and supplementary security services to the downtowns, i.e. the issue of managing the software of the urban environments. Today, BIDs are involved in the designing and planning of activities for the downtowns, e.g. designing year-round events and producing festivals or events; and they are also involved in managing façade improvement programs, sidewalk vending and public parking system. In other words, their current scope of works includes designing and managing the software and management of the hardware. In addition, a few have taken on the role to be involved in developing vision or strategic plan and formulating urban design guidelines, i.e. involving in the hardware design.

Figure 24: Development of the Managing Mechanism

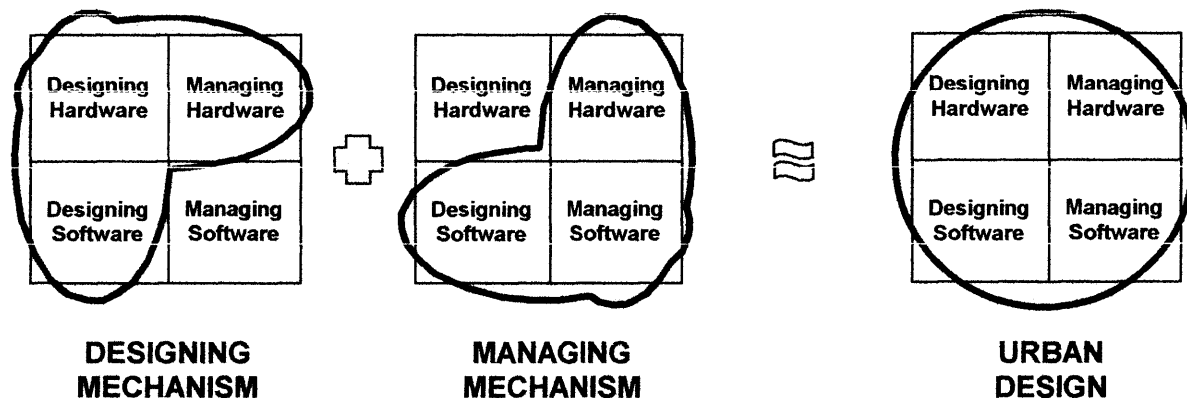


Combining the Development of Design and Managing Mechanisms

Although the mechanisms are discussed separately, they are the components of urban design that are illustrated in the urban design framework in Chapter 1. The combination of the two different concepts and approaches offers downtowns a way to think comprehensively about how downtowns want to promote and market themselves in order to develop unique and pleasant environments and to compete with each other. The Downtowns could then address the challenges and needs presented in Chapter 2 by having vibrant and attractive environments to attract and retain businesses and talents, and an efficient and effective process to run the downtowns.

The vibrant and attractive environment is achieved when the downtowns have the wares, i.e. basically the urban environment or the urban design products. A vibrant environment would provide many things for the workers, residents and tourists to see, do, be engaged and involved in, and remember. An aesthetically pleasing, comfortable and safe environment with a variety and diversity of activities and programs would attract the live-in and the transient populations and provide enough distractions to make them stay. These factors can be achieved when there is a good design mechanism. The efficient and effective process would make sure that the wares are put in place, well run and taken good care of. In this way, downtown would be better off economically, socially and politically. These can be achieved when there is a good managing mechanism.

Figure 25: Combining the Development of Design and Managing Mechanisms



PART 2: EXAMPLES



26



27



28



29

Figure 26: Post Office Square, Boston

Figure 27: Lowertown (top right), St. Paul

Figure 28: City Hall Plaza, Boston

Celebrating Patriots' win in the Football Game 2002

Figure 29: WaterFire on Providence River, Providence

Rudi Bruner Award website

Saint Paul on the Mississippi
Development Framework

WaterFire website

Section 1

Using the Design AND Management Approaches

Redevelopment of Post Office Square, Boston

'We live in a time of impoverished government, and our "public" works are often in fact private. Post Office Square Park is an example.'

- CAMPBELL, Robert
The Boston Globe July 24, 1992

'Better things happen when public and private interests work together. The park was collaboration between the city and a private group, the Friends of Post Office Square, led by the Beacon Companies development group. Beacon profited because its buildings fronting the park grew in value. The city profited because it got a great public space. Everybody won, proving that civic improvement is not a zero-sum game.'

- CAMPBELL, Robert
The Boston Globe March 26, 1993

The Lowertown Historic District, St. Paul

On using an independent not-for-profit development intermediary.

'An independent non-profit corporation such as LRC can make a big difference in urban redevelopment. It has an important public purpose, but it has the advantage of being private. It can remain somewhat insulated from politics. It can help package developments through direct negotiation with interested developers, with the flexibility of innovative financing. It can advance the long-term interest of a community by advocating and integrated development framework for a large area. It can help achieve better designed communities through a creative and careful design dialogue with city government and the private sector, a link that can considerably facilitate and ameliorate urban revitalization and conservation.'

- LU Weiming
1986

Chapter 6 Redevelopment of Post Office Square, Boston

Introduction

In 1981, a 3-story concrete parking garage located in the heart of Boston's revitalized financial district was deteriorating.



Figure 30: The old and new Post Office Square
Top: The old garage
Bottom: The new park and underground garage

Sources:

Top - Rudi Bruner Award

Bottom - Architecture, August 1993

It occupied a whole street block with an area of 1.5 acre. The buildings that were looking at this unsightly concrete structure turned their backs from it. At that time, there was an economic boom. Across the street, there was a new office being built and a few buildings were carrying out renovations and major improvements. The garage was a negative externality in the middle of prime real estate.

The Initiation

Among the buildings that were renovated was the old Federal Reserve Bank, located across the street from the garage. The Beacon Cos. had rehabilitated it to the Meridien Hotel and added a new tower. During the opening ceremony, the Beacon Cos. owner, Norman Leventhal said to the then mayor Kevin White that 'the garage has got to go'¹. Leventhal again lobbied for the cause when he met White later at a lunch in the hotel. In 1982, Leventhal approached White again in a meeting at the Parkman House and suggested transforming a dilapidated 900-car garage into a public park with underground garage. This led to further discussions with city officials.

A year later, Leventhal organized a coalition of 19 major financial district building owners and tenants into a non-profit group called Friends of Post Office Square (FOPOS) to carry out the redevelopment plans. Robert Weinberg was hired as the FOPOS's president.

¹ NOLAN, Martin F An article on 'Post Office Square a Study in Success' in *The Boston Globe* June 15, 1993, Tuesday, City Edition pp.18

FOPOS formed a public private partnership with the city of Boston. The plan was that FOPOS would own and operate the new garage, as well as taking the long-term responsibility of managing and maintaining the park. The revenue generated from the park would be used to recoup the building and maintenance costs and pay back investors. When the park was completed, it would be turned over to the city, along with both in-lieu-of-tax payments and all net profits, until the property itself is given to the city in the year 2030.

To finance the project, FOPOS had to raise \$30 million in equity by selling 450 shares to interested members. Each of the purchasing firms would pay \$65,000 for a share and would receive up-to 8 percent return on their investment. The firm would be entitled to use 25 spaces in the new garage with each block of shares. Although the firm would be assured of a parking spot, the owners would still have to pay regular rates for that spot. The members were also hoping that their property would be more attractive due to the presence of the park.

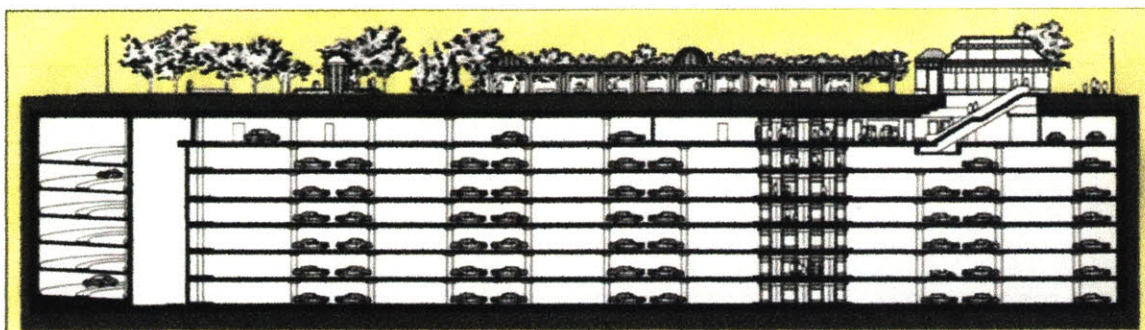


Figure 31: Section across north-south direction

Source: Landscape Architecture, December 1992

The Delays

At the beginning of the project, Weinberg and Leventhal had anticipated that the job would take five years from inception to completion. However, in reality it took five years to get to the demolition of the old garage. The project was delayed because of a few reasons.

The first was how to allow FOPOS to take control of the land. Although the city owned the land, it had given Frank Sawyer a 40-year lease for the old garage since 1954; hence, the lease would only expire in 1994. When Sawyer learnt about the plans, he claimed that he had already 'sold' the rights to a developer who planned to build a giant office tower on that site. In order to gain the site control, FOPOS then had to make a complex set of negotiations that took away a few years. On June of 1986, Sawyer agreed to a buyout of his lease at \$6 million in cash and additional parking fees. FOPOS got the strong support of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) to secure the development rights from the City of Boston.

Then, there was the local cynics' charge that FOPOS was nothing more than a self-interested bunch of property owners who proposed a park because it would increase the value of their hotels, banks and office buildings. They claimed that the public interest would take the hindmost importance.

By that time, there was also a change in the leadership. Raymond Flynn had replaced White as the new mayor.

The new mayor and his administration reviewed the objective of the proposal together with Sawyer's proposal to put another high-rise office tower on the site.

Once the Flynn administration decided to support the park, FOPOS developed a good working relationship with the city. Almost every department at City Hall reviewed the plans and processed them quickly.

However, more time was needed in the process when the state and city officials had to determine and confirm the legal issues concerning a special tax status given to FOPOS to build the garage. Then, this was a new approach and it had required several city council votes before the site can be transferred to FOPOS.

In total, 'the City Council voted twice; the BRA voted five times, and Flynn's official approval was sought three times'².



Figure 32: Site Plan

Source: Rudi Bruner Award

The Implementation

The Mayor appointed design professionals, community open space advocates, businesspeople, and public officials into a committee called Program Development and Design Review Committee (PDDR). Its task was to formulate the design program for the park, participate in the designer selection process and advise FOPOS on the development.

² MCMANUS, Otile An article on 'Post Office Square, is that you? The new park isn't even finished yet, but already it's a landmark' in *The Boston Globe* July 22, 1991, Monday, City Edition pp. 42

FOPOS carried out a comprehensive planning and programming process in order to reach consensus on the program and design on the proposal. They studied other parks, made actual site visits and reviewed slides from European cities. Landscape architects from all over the country were invited to submit credentials before they short-listed three

firms as finalists. After they interviewed and re-interviewed the principals and personnel of the firms, Halvorsen Inc., a young Boston firm was appointed the park designer in 1988. For the garage design, FOPOS had earlier hired a local architecture firm, Ellenzwieg Associates Inc., and Parsons Brinckerhoff, Quade and Douglas.

During the last week of the September 1988, the user's of the old garages were given aqua-colored 'commuter handbooks' that provided them with information on alternative mode of transportation such as carpooling and taking buses or subway as well as fifteen locations of nearby garages and parking lots. The old garage was closed for the last time at the end of the week, and the old Post Office Square garage was demolished on 8 October 1988³.

The construction of the complicated \$82 million project was awarded to J.F. White, a large local contractor. The garage was completed within two years. When the 1,400 parking spaces underground garage was opened in 1 October 1990, the economy had slumped. Other garage operators have reported a 15% decrease in their businesses and were cutting their parking rates and offering discounts.

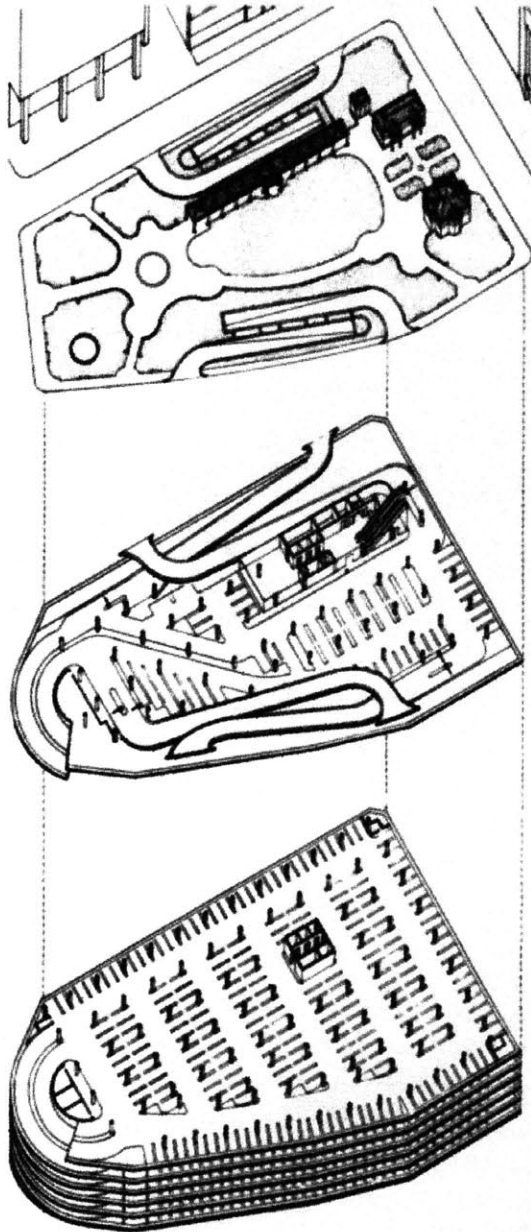


Figure 33: Axonometric

Top – The lower left circle represent the fresh air intake duct. Rectangular openings along ramps represent the exhaust-air grilles. Middle – The first basement level housed the lobby, cashiers, offices and elevators. Bottom – Parking spaces.

Source: Architecture. August 1993

³ KING, John An article on 'Work begins at Post Office Square Garage \$82m Project Includes Public Park; Completion Expected in Early 1991' in *The Boston Globe* October 1, 1988, Saturday, City Edition pp41

In an effort to go 'out to meet and beat the competition'⁴ and to get the commuters to pay \$16 a day to use the space, the FOPOS marketing team had posted themselves near the exits of nearby garages to pass out coupons offering one day of free parking and two more days of \$5 discounts at Post Office Square, bought radio time to lure customers and placed advertisements in trade newspapers aimed at lawyers, bankers and high-tech executives. The construction of the park took longer and was only completed in 3 Jun 1992.

The park received many contributions from various people and organizations. The park designer planted 125 species of trees, shrubs and flowers including seven kinds of vines on the trellis in the 4-foot deep rich topsoil that covered the underground garage.

The Harvard Arboretum had provided some of the rare plants and specimens such as river birches. 'Howard Ben Tre of Providence created the two fountains of bronze and

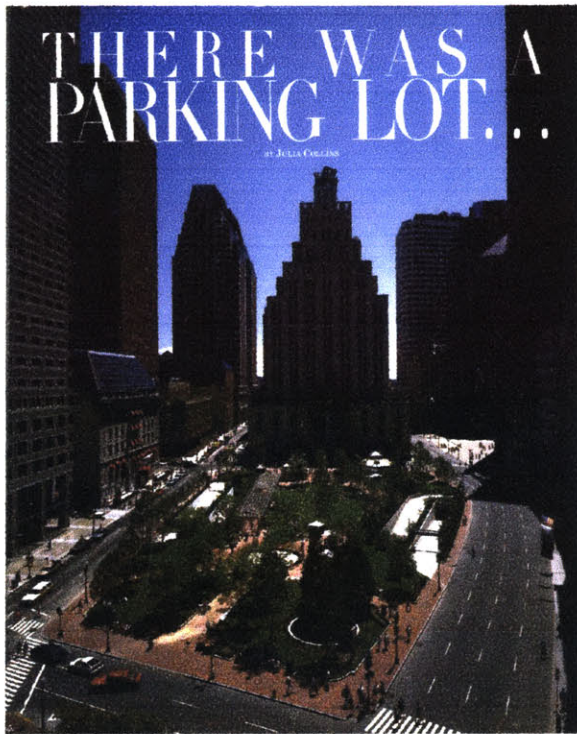


Figure 34: Post Office Square today

Source: Landscape Architecture, December 1992

green English glass; [the design of the] fountains [were] carefully thought out so [that they would still] look as handsome in winter, when the water isn't running, as in other seasons. Boston artist Ross Miller lit Halvorson's 143-foot-long trellis with several thousand miniature low-voltage lights, lights programmed to vary in brightness to create a sense of movement.⁵

The Outcome/Product

The project success can be attributed to the comprehensive approach adopted in the design and management of the project. The effective and efficient mechanisms have helped to transform the square into an attractive urban environment and created open space in an extremely dense quarter of the city. This major focal point and landmark for the Boston's financial district satisfied both a need for public space and a need for

parking. The well-lit park and the activity from the 24-hour garage made people feel safer. The project has received more than 20 planning and architecture awards.

⁴ ACKERMAN, Jerry An article on 'Downtown Has 1,400 New Parking Spaces' in *The Boston Globe* October 1, 1990, Monday, City Edition pp18

⁵ CAMPBELL, Robert An article on 'Post Office Square: The Perfect Park' in *The Boston Globe* July 24, 1992, Friday, City Edition pp41

Campbell, a Boston reporter wrote⁶, “A friend who lives on Beacon Hill makes the walk to Post Office Square every morning just to enjoy the pleasure of breakfast at the little outdoor cafe. At noon, the lawn is carpeted with picnickers. On weekends the fountains become a frolic of children, running in and out among the jets of water. ... Part of the fun is an elegant deception. When you look at Post Office Square Park from above, you realize that two huge chunks have been gored from its sides for the ramps to the

garage. But such is the genius of the design that, as a pedestrian, you're never aware of these ramps at all. The plantings invite you into the park at its corners, screening the ramps from view and shaping a green space that feels whole and unthreatened.”

Surrounded by four one-way streets, the auto ingress and egress ramps to the parking structure are provided on the east and west sides. The entrances are separated from the exits to ensure smooth traffic movement. An internal express ramp is located at the north end of the garage to move motorists between levels.

Each of the parking level is well lit with colorful graphics, laid out in flat grids for easy perpendicular parking, and organized around a central elevator core that is distinguished by colorful neon. High quality finishes and fresh flowers arrangement adorned the gracious main lobby. The parking facility includes a shoeshine station, clean restrooms, a car wash and an automated checkout system for drivers.

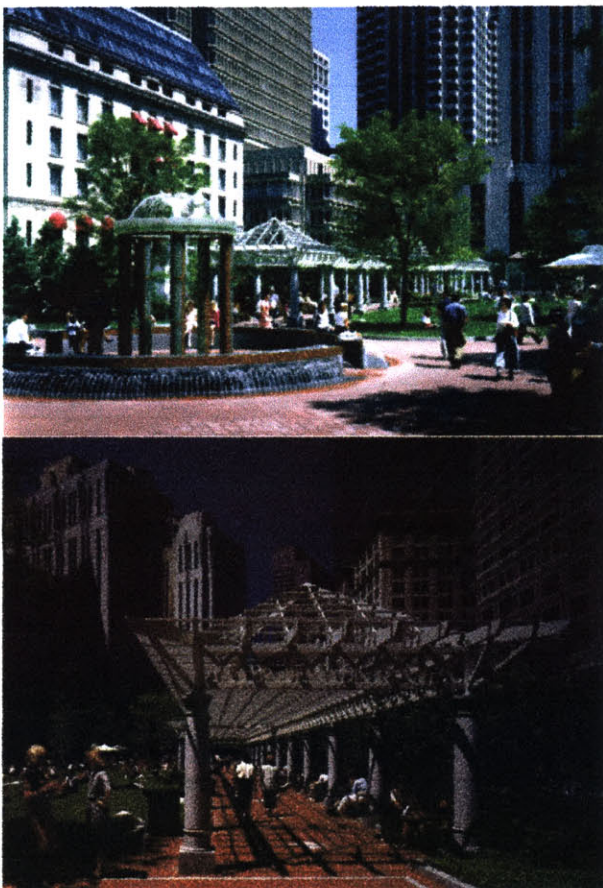


Figure 35: Post Office Square
Views from north (top) and south (below).

Sources: Rudy Bruner and Architecture

The garage offered the nation's first debit-card computerized garage payment system. Designed for people who do not wish to purchase a monthly pass, the card offered a 20% savings off the normal daily parking rate. By prepaying as little as \$80, the customers would receive a special magnetically encoded card that let them enter and exit the garage as many times as needed during the day without ever paying more than the daily rate.

⁶ *ibid.*

Effective management of the parking facility is an important factor in the project's success. Locating an available space is made easy by garage attendants who direct parkers to open spots and by signs that indicate when floors are full. Car care services, shoeshine services and a florist are also available, as well as telephone and clean restrooms. Security is also an important management concern. Video cameras have been installed in the elevator cabs and vestibules, and intercoms are located throughout the garage to provide security. The garage is open and staffed twenty-four hours a day.

The park at ground level has brick walkways and plazas surround one large lawn area at the center and 7 smaller green areas at the edges. A 143-foot trellis, supported by twenty-six granite columns, provides a shaded walkway that connects the North and South Plazas.

At the South Plaza, elevators are provided in two garden pavilions to provide handicapped access from basement parking to the park at ground level. The pavilion at



Figure 36: Post Office Square
Fountain located at North Plaza (top).
Entrance to underground parking (below).

Sources: Urban Land & Landscape Architecture

the east has escalator access to the lower level lobby for the parking garage while the pavilion at the west houses a year-round café, the Milk Street Café. At the North Plaza, rich planting and low granite seat walls surround a bronze-and-green-glass fountain/sculpture.

The parking garage was one of the most expensive ever built. Each space costs approximately \$34,000⁷. The high cost was due in part to the deep excavation, the extra supports needed for the heavy soil above, and the difficulties of buying out the previous owner. The \$80 million construction cost was entirely privately financed from the initial shareholder contributions to FOPOS - \$0.93 million, an offering of preferred stock⁸ that raised \$29.25 million, and debt financing that is held by Fleet Bank - \$60 million. With the total project funding exceeds projects cost, the excess funding is held in reserve in a line of credit.

⁷ The Wall Street Journal called it "Garage Mahal" in a 1994 article.

⁸ Four hundred and fifty preferred shares were sold in just 6 weeks. Each of the local businesses, who bought individual shares for \$65,000, would have the right to a monthly parking space and would be paid a cumulative 8% dividend when debt relief is completed.

The Milk Street Café pays rent to FOPOS. Garage attendants patrol the park and provide general maintenance, while Friends of Post Office Square pays for a private park ranger in the summer.

The City of Boston receives a lot of financial benefits from the project – the city was paid \$1million for its ownership interest, and it continues to receive property taxes and the net cash⁹ after deducting for debt service and maintenance of park. Once the debt and equity are repaid, ownership of the project will revert to the city. The profits would be allocated to other neighborhood parks as well as to the city's general fund.



Figure 37: Post Office Square

Source: Urban Land, December 1997

‘Post Office Square Park is the perfect park in the perfect location with a perfect design and perfect maintenance. This one is a four-bagger.’

- CAMPBELL, Robert

An article on ‘Post Office Square: The Perfect Park’
The Boston Globe July 24, 1992, Friday, City Edition pp41

⁹ The garage generates approximately \$8 million a year, which covers debt service, taxes and the \$225,000 operating costs for the park above.

Chapter 7 The Lowertown Historic District, St. Paul

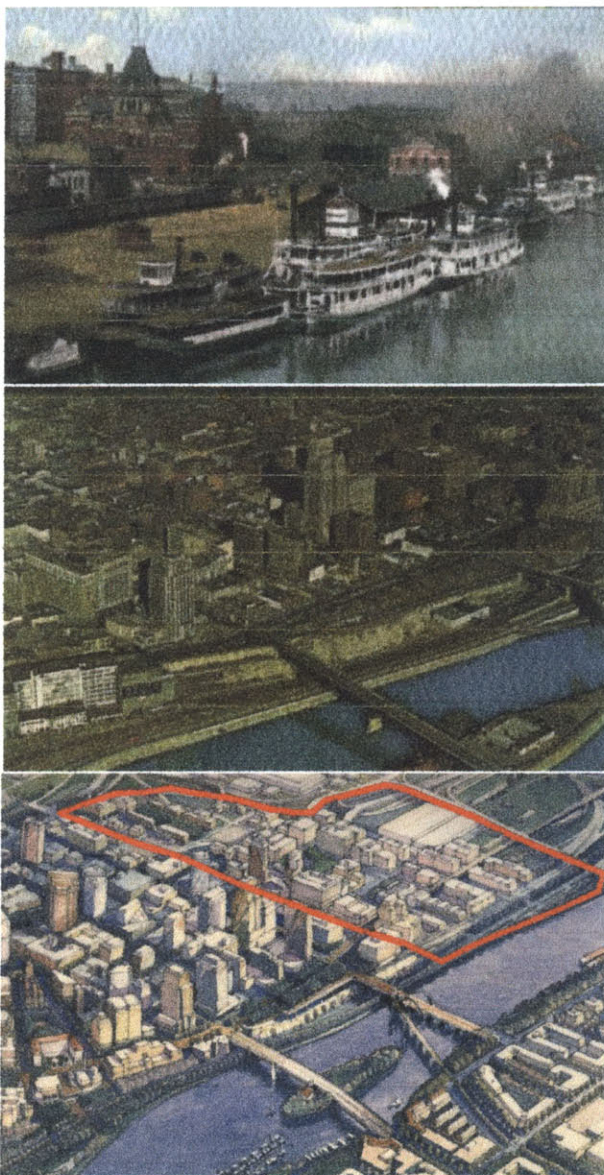


Figure 38: Lowertown Historic District, St Paul
View of the area at three different time periods.

Source: Greenberg and Dark Gabor Limited, 1999

Introduction

The Lowertown Historic District is the historic heart of the St. Paul with an area about 180 acres. It was once known as the Lower Landing on the Mississippi, where the first 20 years of St. Paul's community lived and the businesses centered. When the railroads replaced the river traffic, the business district moved to the higher ground at the western side. Lowertown then became the area for manufacturers. By the 1950s, this economic activity declined and the area was replaced by major infrastructure; Interstate 94 wiped out the last of the Victorian houses in this old residential neighborhood. Fortunately, the southerly portion closer to the river was spared. Soon after, the rail yards also disappeared and the area remained neglected.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Norman Mears initiated a plan to renovate the existing buildings. He managed to get the city to renovate Smith Park¹ and construct market-rate housing on an adjacent block; and, a private investment to refurbish a block of historic buildings facing the park. After Mears death, the revitalization efforts slowed down. By the late 1970s, the Lowertown Historic District was in need of revitalization to address many of its urban issues that included

disinvestments in central cities, eroding tax base, declining job opportunities, suburban sprawl, displacement of urban poor, including artists living in run-down warehouses, and destruction of historic buildings.

¹ Norman Mears was the first person to spearhead the revitalization of Lowertown. The city renamed the park as Mears Park in honor of his pioneering efforts. Earlier, the park was called after Robert Smith who had donated his residential land for use as a public square.

The Public-Private Partnership

Recognizing the potential of reinvestment in this historic area, the former Mayor George Latimer submitted a request to McKnight Foundation² to establish a long-term approach that would create a vital, dynamic, economically viable, and desirable new urban neighborhood. In February 1978, they initiated the project and formed a non-profit organization called the Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation (LRC) with members from the public agencies, private lenders, foundations, neighborhood organizations, the

artist community, business associations and many other organizations. This was a public private partnership with the objectives of “giving the overall revitalization effort identity, importance, flexibility and apolitical action capability and establishing a positive redevelopment climate”³.

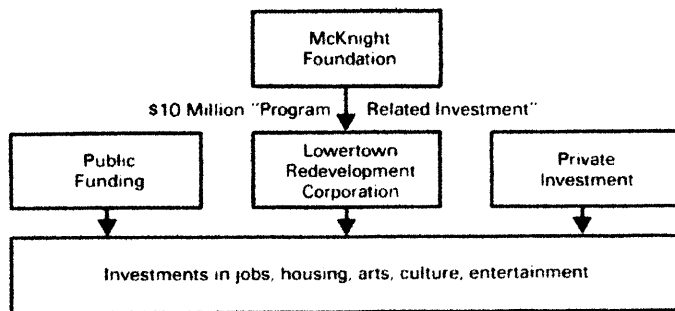


Figure 39: Funding for Lowertown Projects

Source: Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation, 1981

The City pledged to integrate its own capital

improvements program and the existing Downtown Development Plan with LRC's efforts. McKnight Foundation pledged \$10mil in April 1978, made available to LRC as funding for:

- a. Program-related Investment (PRI)⁴;
- b. Providing direct financial support on a limited basis for activities that are judged to promote the overall development effort. This was to cover start-up costs for a proposed project. However, once the project was under construction, the expenses were refunded to LRC for reinvestment in other projects;
- c. Making loans and loan guarantees at below market interest rates for selected projects;
- d. Acting as the base for other financing tools⁵ to attract \$100mil of private investments; and,
- e. The operations of the Corporation.

² According to a publication called Partnership in Lowertown by Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation, St Paul, Minnesota August 1981, the Foundation was interested in generating large-scale urban development as a national demonstration of new approached toward urban revitalization.

³ Partnership in Lowertown, Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation, St Paul, Minnesota August 1981

⁴ A legal vehicle that allows foundations to invest capital in projects and still retain tax-exempt status. The potential of PRI as a large private funding source grows as the uses for urban projects become more clearly defined.

⁵ Included are industrial revenue bonds, tax exempt and taxable bonds, tax increment financing, tax abatement, historic rehabilitation tax credits, low income housing tax credits, Minnesota Housing Financing bonds, Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG), Section 8 housing (rental subsidies), foundation grants, capital improvement program funds, National Equity Funds, LRC loans and loan guarantees, LRC loans for front end development expenses, artist "sweat equity", and many others.

LRC⁶ performed three important roles⁷:

- a. Design
Design center to build the "urban village" for the area;
- b. Management
 - i. *Urban development bank* or 'gap financier' that provides front-end expenses, loans and loan guarantees to a number of projects; and,
 - ii. *Information and marketing office* to provide a constant flow of information sheets, brochures, and slide presentations to potential investors, residents, businesspersons and the interested public.

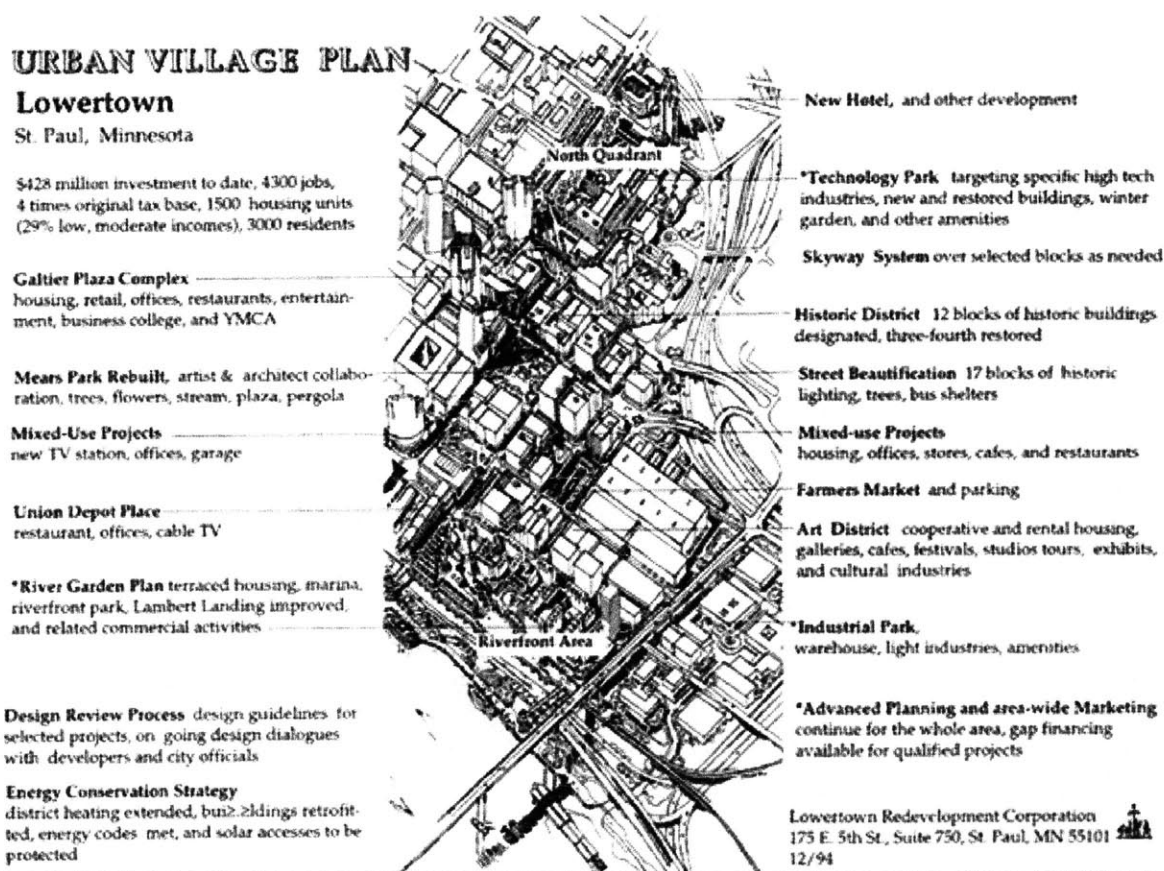


Figure 40: The Urban Village Plan
This is the major contribution by Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation.

Source: Rudi Bruner Award

Table 5 listed LRC's functions with respect to its role.

⁶ LRC's program stresses 1) incremental sensitive rehabilitation, rather than large-scale, destructive urban renewal; 2) self-reliance, rather than over-dependence upon public subsidies, 3) maximum leveraging of private investment.

⁷ In the beginning, LRC also performed the role of an interim developer and as an agent of change to stimulate growth.

Table 5: Relationship between LRC's Roles and its Functions and Activities

	ROLES	FUNCTIONS & ACTIVITIES
	DESIGN	
	Design Center	<p><u>Developing pragmatic visions and design concepts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attended to economic factors, accommodated and planned for social amenities, and provided for community needs and services as LRC considered urban development to include buildings and open spaces as well as their interactions; - Ensured that each development projects have gone through careful market analysis and have a set of implementation strategies in placed. - Learnt from successful projects in other cities and adapted the individual components into the overall plan. The purpose was not to mimic other cities but to benefit from their experience. <p><u>Facilitating future development plans</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Played a lead role in designing the Streets and Transits Improvement Program, applied to the US Department of Transportation, organized a scheme for local public support and generating necessary local private support. <p><u>Formulating pragmatic design concepts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undertook design studies for redevelopment projects; - Preserved existing architectural characters and integrate new developments into the existing urban fabric; - Designed public open spaces and streets with landscape amenities; - Ensured integration of important art works into projects; - Selected artist to provide artworks; - Looked for ways to provide more housing for artists, including sourcing for matching fund from the National Endowment for the Arts and local commitments; and, - Developed and refined concepts through market, financial and economic analyses, traffic and circulation patterns and commercial and retail service studies. <p><u>Setting design guidelines for various projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set out and control design standard; - Involved in the selection of architect and design reviews for projects sponsored by LRC; and - Provided consultancy and advice for non-LRC projects. <p><u>Developing programs based on positioning strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lowertown was divided into 4 'quadrants' – North Village, Mears Park, Riverfront and Industrial Park. Each of the quadrants would have comprehensive urban design framework, specific and unique uses and a progressive schedule for development. While they were developed as separate products, the areas were integrated and efforts were made to link developments back to the downtown core through a system of skyways, pedestrian greenways, and the provision of shuttle bus service.

	ROLES	FUNCTIONS & ACTIVITIES
	MANAGEMENT	
	Urban Development Bank	<u>Providing Development Financing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Made program expenditures to set the framework for future project investment or go directly into development projects. These expenditures include financial studies; preliminary design; economic, market, legal and appraisal studies; building and site surveys; soil test; grant applications; marketing; energy studies; art fairs; and historic preservation efforts.
	Information & Marketing Office	<u>Marketing and Communication</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepared and distributed developers packets, news articles, press kits, reports and other materials and supports and participates in seminars on economic development, historic preservation, urban design and downtown revitalization.
		<u>External Relations</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remained in touch with important local and national organizations involved in urban development.

Implementation

‘LRC was set up to intervene where government alone would be cumbersome or slow. While it does not choose to do projects itself, it played some role in almost every project, often catalyzing action between private developers, public agencies, and funding entities.’⁸ It had to work with many different individuals and organizations in public and private sectors. To get the various parties to work together, LRC set a larger vision for the whole area, develop a methodology for working cooperatively with others, and then devising specific year-to-year programs to implement this larger vision. LRC also depended on the influence of its board members, who are prominent civic leaders, and the kind of movers and shakers, to get things done in the best interest of the city.

During implementation, LRC encountered conflicts between city’s and developer’s, as well as LRC’s objectives. To address the conflict and yet maintain a high design quality, LRC had resorted to using its administrative powers, increasing its influences, and negotiation strategies. The administrative powers include placing mandatory requirements, setting up design guidelines, selecting qualified professionals and providing professional inputs. It increased its influences by remaining and acting as a consultant to the mayor to provide professional advice and help reconciling differences between different parties. The negotiation strategies include mediation and persuasion. Examples of each are listed in Table 6.

⁸ FARBSTEIN, Jay and WENER, Richard 1996 Building Coalitions for Urban Excellence for The Bruner Foundation as part of the 1995 Rudy Bruner Award for Excellence in the Urban Environment Bruner Foundation, Cambridge, Massachusetts pp97-98

Table 6: Examples of Strategies Applied to Resolve Conflict⁹

	ACTIONS	EXAMPLES
	Administrative Powers	
	Mandatory requirements	Mandated in the loan agreement for Galtier Plaza that specialty shopping center must be above certain size, have certain public amenities and the historic façade must be protected.
	Setting up design guidelines in advance	Set up the requirements for the appropriate land uses, densities, building envelopes, pedestrian and vehicular access, and open space requirements for an abandoned mission site and Block L.
	Selecting qualified architects	Appoint highly qualified architects, landscape architects, and urban designers to ensure quality products.
	Providing professional input	Testified to the Landmark Commission that some old sheds are insignificant to be designated as historic landmarks and urged the City Council to get the Farmer's Market relocated to a new site to clear the way for a new hotel.
	Gaining Influences	
	Mayor's intervention	The mayor invited LRC to advise the city staff and the developer on the design for Hometel. The city staff and developer were convinced; LRC's consulting architects were hired and LRC's recommendations were adopted.
	Mayor's arbitration	Reconciled the differences with the city on how housing should be built in a specific project in front of the mayor.
	Negotiations	
	Mediation	Mediated the conflict between the city and developers on the skyway for Galtier Plaza by proposing an alternative which respects the city's established standards, and at the same time accommodates the developer's desire to create a unique design ... by introducing new skylights to a standard skyway, plus other improvements, thus creating a more dramatic entrance to the project.
	Persuasion	When LRC did not like the initial streetscape design, they persuaded the city to engage a consultant, at LRC expense, to assist in the design effort. The result was a more sympathetic design for the district. LRC persuaded one major corporation not to put golden-mirrored glass partially on an old building during the renovation by pointing out possible protest by preservationists, the intended passive solar panels created by the glass would be much of the time in the shadow of an adjoining building and its elimination would save \$460,000.

⁹ After Lu Weiming in an article on 'The Management Power of The Downtown Corporation' in *How Downtowns Organize for Results: 24 Case Studies* ALEXANDER, Laurence A (Editor) 1987 Downtown Research & Development Center New York pp37-38

Over the years, Lowertown has developed a series of physical plans. The first plan that was proposed in 1978 laid the groundwork for initial development. The plans were then revised to respond to the changing conditions and reflect lessons learnt. Although new proposals were made in the latest long-range plan called Lowertown Small Area Plan, the main vision and objectives were kept.

Lowertown was envisioned as an urban village, a lively and colorful community, where people of every income level, age and ethnic background may live and work in the heart of the city. In order to achieve this, LRC has developed the following objectives: -

- a. Attract new investment to create jobs and broaden the tax base;
- b. Provide permanent housing for all income levels through historic preservation and new development;
- c. Establish a lively art district with affordable working and living spaces;
- d. Conserve and rehabilitate older buildings; and,
- e. Create a sense of place by establishing an effective urban design plan, guidelines, and review process to ensure that new development harmonized with historic architecture.

The Outcomes

In 1983, Lowertown was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, giving the area protection under the National Historic Preservation Act.

Attracting new investments

Substantial economic revitalization has been achieved with total investment in Lowertown exceeding \$428 million - four times the original goal. There has been a greater interest in investments. Many businesses, large and small, have moved in, helping to broaden the tax base by more than 400 percent. By 1995, 2900 construction jobs and 4600 permanent jobs have been generated. LRC has achieved substantial leveraging of its resources. In 1995, every dollar LRC invested in Lowertown attracted \$20 of other public and private investment. This leveraging ratio of 1 to 20 compares very favorably with Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) record of 1 to 5.

LRC had only modest losses on the loans and loan guarantees given over the years by keeping its office and expenses lean, applying disciplined gap financing, taking substantial but carefully calculated risks, and seeking reasonable return.

Providing new housing

More than 1,500 units have been built and renovated from the warehouse space for both rental and owner-occupied uses. About thirty percent of the total stock is designated for low and moderate-income housing. There is diversity in the live-in population, from the young professionals and downtown workers to retirees, artists and others. This diversity has strengthened the sense of community.

‘Through warehouse conversions and the construction of Galtier Plaza, which includes housing, Lowertown saw a thirty percent population increase in the 1980s, to about 4,300 residents. That makes it one of the fastest-growing neighborhoods in St. Paul and Minneapolis.¹⁰

Establishing a lively art district

Lowertown has a program called Cooperative Artists’ Housing project. Through it, Lowertown has managed to keep its art district by ensuring that existing artists were not displaced by revitalization efforts. Inexpensive studio spaces were made available, live-in workspace were created and new galleries opened in the area. By 1993, three buildings have been converted to housing and studio space for artists. The first Cooperative Artists’ Housing project was completed in 1986 providing twenty-nine lofts and a sky-lit atrium that is used for continuous, rotating exhibitions of residents’ work. Its success has served as a model for the other projects.

To some, while arts is still strong in Lowertown, there has been a loss of vibrancy. Previously, the artistic community was one of the largest (per capita) in the country outside New York City. Now, the artistic community only ‘exists as a shadow of its former self, after they were forced out by real estate speculators looking to capitalize on the "loft style living" condo/apartment trend’¹¹. To others, it is important to note that ‘although the city’s Lowertown plan has endeared it to artists, it does not appear to have attracted the restaurants and other businesses that generally follow an influx of creative types. In the typical scenario, the so-called "SoHo effect" kicks in as restaurants, design studios and boutiques re-colonize the neighborhood for middle-class businesses, drive up property values and economically displace the artists - as has happened in Minneapolis’ Warehouse District¹². It remains to be seen if Lowertown will continue to support the art policies, or it will, like Minneapolis, want more economic bang for its development bucks.

Conserving and rehabilitating older buildings

The efforts saved most of Lowertown’s residual charm of turn-of-the-century buildings, narrow alleys and tree-lined streets. Among the historic structures that were preserved and reused include Union Station, the Burlington Northern building and the warehouses designed by Cass Gilbert. In 1998, St. Paul’s City Council decision not to tear down the Crane Building, a 94-year-old Lowertown warehouse to make room for a parking lot was due to LRC’s effort to protect it. LRC cited similar rehabilitated buildings have attracted millions of dollars to the Lowertown area, and has offered to finance the rehabilitation project.¹³

¹⁰ MCAULIFFE, Bill An article on ‘Plan would increase residential elements of Lowertown area’ in Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN) February 16, 1994, Saint Paul Edition pp.1B

¹¹ HOOVER, Joe 2002 St. Paul Phototour: Lowertown web pages <http://www.geomyidae.com/about.html>

¹² ABBA, Mary An article on ‘The Arts Ticket: Twin Cities’ next mayors will face some tough questions’ in Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN) September 12, 1993, Metro Edition pp1F

¹³ DUCHSCHERE, Kevin An article on ‘Council Votes to Preserve Lowertown Warehouse’ in Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN) February 12, 1998, Metro Edition pp.5B

Creating a sense of place

LRC has ensured that new developments in the area are better designed and relate better to context of the area by drawing up a set of urban design guidelines.

An example is Galtier Plaza, located next to Mears Park and had three significant historical structures within the street block that it occupied. The massive project comprised of 480 housing units divided into two towers, and 280,000 square feet of commercial space in the 5-story podium.

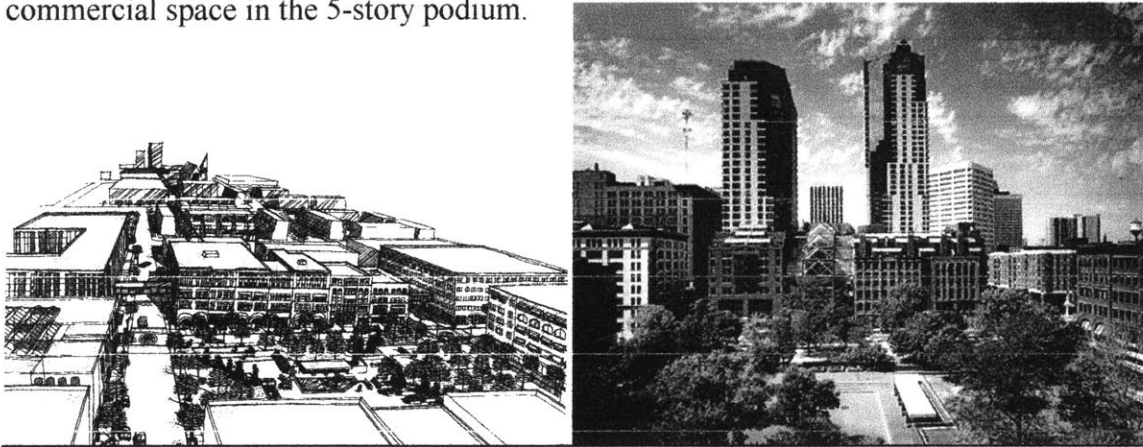


Figure 41: Galtier Plaza, Lowertown

The drawing on the left showed the initial proposal and the photograph on the right showed the built project.

Source: Rudi Bruner Award

An arcade was provided as a through-block link between the park at the eastern side and another street on the western side of the development. This link together with a skyway link formed part of the larger network to connect the Lowertown's focal point to downtown's financial district.

Out of the three historical buildings, only one remained intact. The others had their facades dismantled and reinstalled at a new position overlooking the park. The project has not been aesthetically successful as the architectural design was beyond LRC's control. It was opened unfinished in 1985. Plagued by financial problems, the original developer handed the properties to the major lender, Chemical Bank of New York¹⁴. In 1989, Zaidan Holdings bought the property for about 10% of its original construction price of \$14 million. It then turned the building from an upscale shopping mecca into an entertainment and retail complex that caters to downtown residents and workers.

¹⁴ BUCHTA, Jim An article on 'Galtier Apartments are Part of Lowertown Renaissance' in Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN) March 11, 1995, Metro Edition pp.26H

Infrastructure Improvements

In addition, a number of infrastructure improvements were also made. LRC facilitated streetscape improvements program to provide street lighting that was lacking, put up signage to direct traffic to the area, rebuild bridges over I-94, relocate the Farmer's Market closer to the center of the neighborhood, and connect Lowertown and the rest of the downtown with skyway systems and trolley service.

By the early 1990s, LRC has become the leader and an agent for change for the revitalization of Lowertown Historic District. Most of the critical issues initially facing Lowertown have been successfully addressed.

It has helped to revitalize and promote the growth of Lowertown and to drastically improve the community's negative image of the area in the 1970s to a very positive one in the 1990s by using both design and management mechanisms.

'LRC's apparent secret: In one body, it's a financial dealmaker, design watchdog, preservation advocate and indefatigable promoter of the neighborhood.'¹⁶ A lot of its success could be attributed to its executive director, Lu Weiming. Lu who was former urban design chief for Minneapolis and Dallas, saw the formation of the organization and later took over the leadership role. Since then, he was tireless in shaping, building and perfecting Lowertown into an urban village and a prime model for merging historic preservation, successful design, economic rejuvenation and lively street life, even along streets once threatened with abandonment.¹⁷



Figure 43: Scenes of Lowertown

Source: Lowertown website and Rudy Bruner Award

¹⁶ PIERCE, Neal An article on 'Cyber-Villages: The Formula for New City Recovery?' in The Times-Picayune March 10, 1997 Monday, THIRD pp.B7

¹⁷ *ibid.* Lu was described as Shanghai-born designer-developer-visionary in the article.

Downtown Saint Paul should be comprised of a series of linked "urban villages."

- | Emerging | Proposed |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Concord-Robert | 6. Northeast Quadrant |
| 2. Irvine Park | 7. Fitzgerald Park |
| 3. Rice Park | 8. Northwest Quadrant |
| 4. West 7th | 9. Upper Landing |
| 5. Lowertown | 10. Kellogg Mall |
| | 11. Lower Landing |
| | 12. The Esplanade |
| | 13. South Wabasha Bridgehead |
| | 14. Harriet Island |

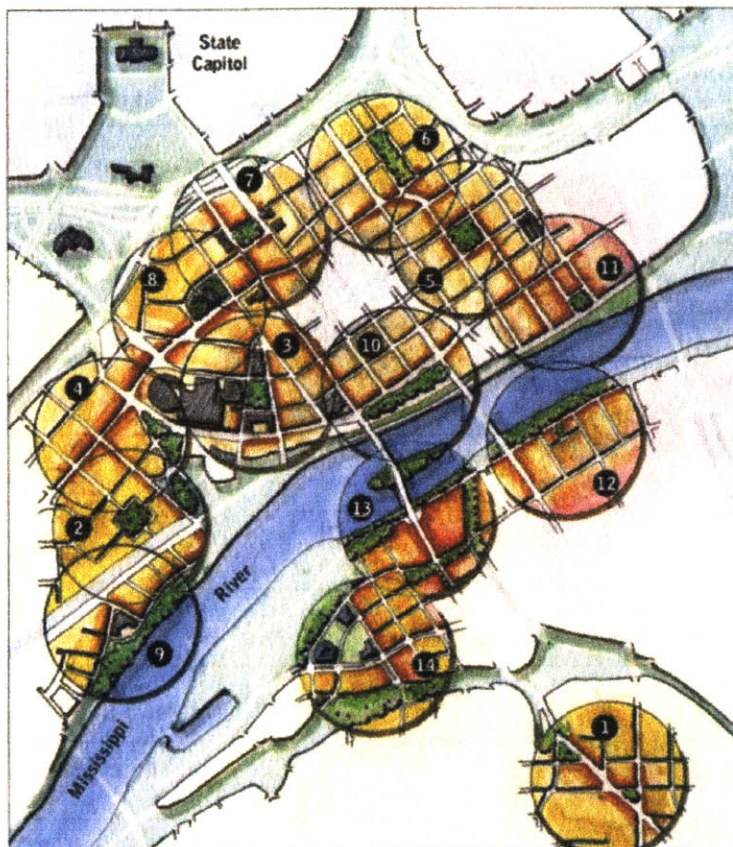


Figure 44: The Urban Villages

The city adopted the Lowertown model and applied it to the whole downtown.

Source: Greenberg and Dark Gabor Limited, 1999

Lowertown Historic District has won prestigious preservation awards from the National Trust for Historic Preservation¹⁸ and was one of the finalists for the Rudy Bruner Award in 1995. It has been cited as an urban development model¹⁹.

LRC has been requested to speak in civic forums at Hartford, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Dallas, etc to share its experiences and to help other cities like Chattanooga, Tennessee to set up mechanisms similar to LRC.

Today, Lowertown and LRC served as a model for many U.S. cities.

¹⁸ MACK, Linda An article on 'Lowertown Preservation Wins an Award' in *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN) October 29, 1995, Metro Edition pp.8F

¹⁹ OSBORNE, David and GAEBLER, Ted 1992 *Reinventing Government* Addison-Wesley

"In Lowertown, a public-private partnership exercised through a private non-profit corporation is clearly a practical and effective arrangement for achieving long-term goals. The non-profit corporation combines the best attributes of public and private entities as it can effectively garner support from both the public and private sources. Such corporations are independent of city governments, yet have the ability to work closely with the municipal planning and development staffs. Their independence frees them from restrictions, such as red tape and uncertain budgets, often imposed on the public sector. They can use financing tools not available to public entities. And the non-profit corporations are potentially better able to make the long-term commitment to the development of a community that is needed for any significant civic undertaking.

Effective guidelines must be applied to a larger area over a period of time to achieve quality urban design. These guidelines must set some basic common parameters for building and site design, so that adjoining projects may be related to each other. The basic objective must not be merely building individual monuments to satisfy the owner/ and/or designer's ego; rather, the building of an attractive and livable community should be the primary concern."

- Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation
August 1981

Section 2

Starting with the Design OR Management Approach

The Revitalization of City Hall Plaza, Boston

'We shouldn't forget that City Hall Plaza is only 30 years old. That makes it a newborn in the life span of world-class civic spaces. It took 700 years for the Piazza San Marco in Venice to settle into its present famous configuration. Probably it's impossible to create a truly great civic space at any one moment in time. You need the layering of many generations to achieve shape, depth, and resonance. At City Hall Plaza, we're just beginning.'

- CAMPBELL, Robert
The Boston Globe, April 21, 1996

Capital Center and Downcity Plans, Providence

'To make Downcity lively, attractive, safe and accessible, capitalize on its existing physical and human resources: the human scale of its streets, the excellent traditional architecture, the creativity of its artists, the vigor of its universities, the commitment of people willing to invest their time, talents and finances in its success. These assets are already here; with proper organization and management, Downcity can fulfill the potential many visitors already find remarkable in Providence.'

- Mayor Vincent A. CIANCI, Jr.
January 1, 1994

Chapter 8 The Revitalization of City Hall Plaza, Boston

Introduction

Boston's City Hall Plaza is located next to major downtown shopping areas, Downtown Crossing and Faneuil Hall Market, which are major tourist attractions. The current mayor, Thomas Menino viewed it as a bridge between four key areas: Beacon Hill, the North End, Faneuil Hall and the Financial District.

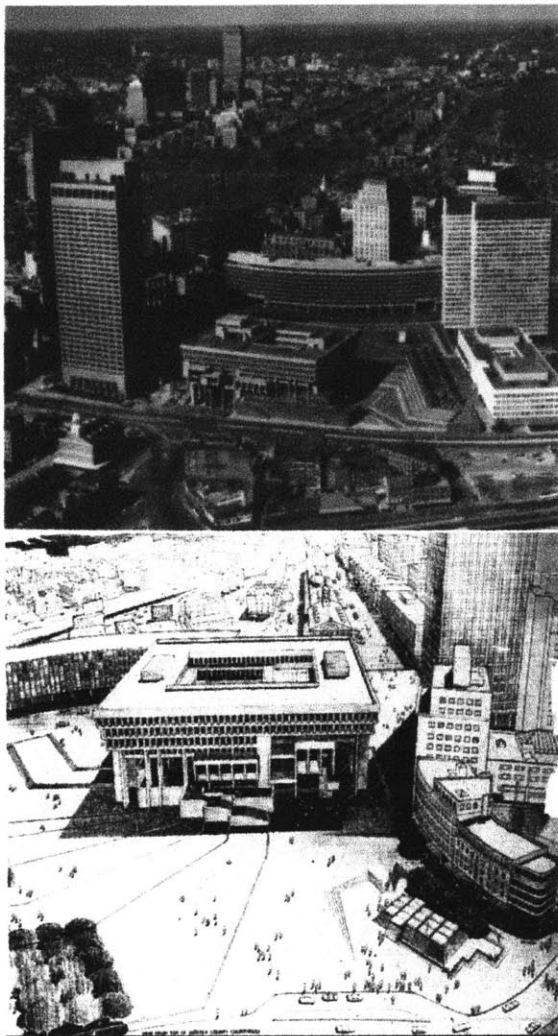


Figure 45: Views of City Hall Plaza, Boston
Top – looking from the docks.
Bottom – looking from Beacon Hill

Source: Architectural Record, March 1964

By right, the plaza should have been successful in attracting a lot of people to use it; it is located close to a large working population and tourists. But it is not. Most of the working population saw the plaza as challenging tundra to be crossed hurriedly.

The lack of shelters and activities, and the cold windy conditions make it an uncomfortable place to hang around, let alone to admire the surrounding developments. The place is a big brick-paved open space devoid of activities. There is nothing to attract tourist here, except for the transit station.

Bostonians wanted the plaza to become not just a community space and a formal place for ceremonies, it was to be a gathering place to meet, a contemplative place to rest, and a recreational place to bring in festivals and activities.

There were three parties who wanted something to be done - the Parks Department had been longing to vitalize the plaza to draw people from the overburdened Boston Common; the Boston Society of Architects wanted to investigate on how to make the plaza a popular place; and, the mayor wanted something to be done to the symbolic space.

The Design Only Solution

In 1993, the Park Department planted palm trees in an attempt to create a more inviting environment; only to replace it two years later with flowers and picnic tables. Clearly, this managing the hardware solution was near sighted. It did little to activate the space especially during the colder months.

On 25 September 1994, the city sponsored an Ideas' Competition with the intention to search for ideas that would make the plaza a more inviting, accessible and popular place. This was designing the hardware and software approach. The competition was opened to everybody, designers and non-designers. A total of 190 entries were received. Majority of the entries proposed redesigning the physical environment, i.e. focused on the hardware; from adding fountains, skating rings, stages, arcades, sculptures, campaniles, bridges to building museums, monuments, memorials, retail stores, cafes, market places. Timothy C. Hurley carried out a detailed study of these ideas and proposals, especially on the 5 winning entries for his 1995 master's thesis at MIT¹. None of the winning entries were implemented as the contest served as an impetus for looking for ways to overhaul the space.

The Managing Solution

In 1995, the Parks Department gathered a group of high-octane civic and business leaders² to form a non-profit organization called Trust for City Hall Plaza (the Trust). Its mission was to plan long-range improvements and to transform the plaza into an area with green space, retail space, and a walkway to the city's waterfront³.

Norman Leventhal was appointed the leader of the Trust because he was well known for having masterminded the Post Office Square Park (PO Square) development. PO Square was a successful urban project that has generated monies for the management of the park and parking place, for the non-profit organization, and for the city. It was hoped that Leventhal could wield the same magic he used for PO Square and apply them to the revitalization of the plaza. The main formula was to get the Trust to be financially self-sufficient in managing the planning and implementation of redevelopment on Boston's new City Hall Plaza. To do that the Trust would collect \$15,000⁴ in annual dues from each of its corporations and institutions members in the Trust. In addition, the city gave the Trust a long-term lease that allowed them to sublet properties to outside developers. This gave them the flexibility to propose new development that would act as a 'cash-cow' to bring in monies for capital improvements and maintenance.

¹ HURLEY, Timothy C (1995) Thesis titled Is Public Space Still Possible? Lessons from City Hall Ideas Competition submitted for Master of Science in Architectural Studies degree at MIT.

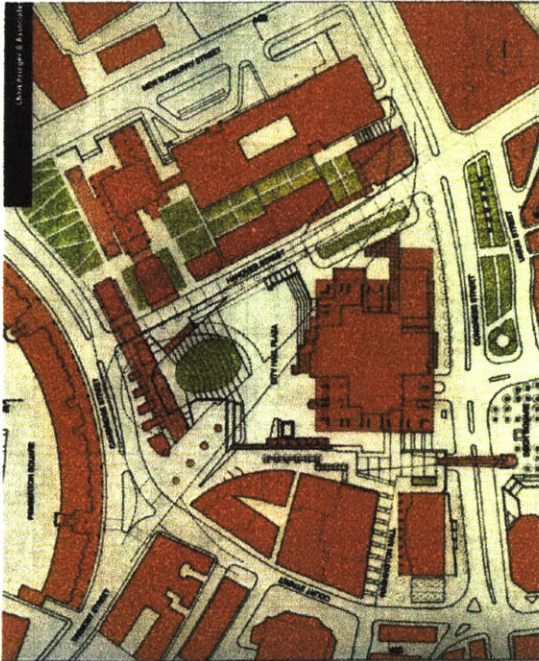
² CAMPBELL, Robert An article on 'Plaza Sweet; Arts etc..' in The Boston Globe, April 21, 1996 Sunday, City Edition pp.55

³ WALKER, Adrian An article on 'A City Eyesore May Soon Get A Makeover' in The Boston Globe, August 15, 1995, Tuesday, City Edition pp.15 [words in brackets are quoted from the Boston Globe Editorial dated December 25 1995, Friday City edition pp.25]

⁴ This was reduced to \$10,000 annually in 2001 to keep the sponsors on board.

When the Trust met on for the first time on 22 December 1995, they agreed that 'this great public meeting space was considered too big and diffuse, i.e. spilling over without boundaries onto Cambridge and State streets. Their reaction was to construct structures around the 11-acre plaza to make it smaller and more inviting⁵. This intention was formulated into their first presentation to the board of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) on 17 April 1996.

Besides constructing a low-rise people-friendly structure around the plaza, the proposal included a commitment for a music garden to be provided by a separate party; a pedestrian bridge to link the plaza to Dock Square via Faneuil Hall Marketplace to be built by the city; improvements to the existing subway entrance; a giant electronic billboard; shops and restaurants on the ground floor of existing buildings, festivals and exhibits; and, a hotel development between the low-rise John F. Kennedy Federal Building (Federal Building) and City Hall that would bring in the monies.



Four months after the presentation to the BRA, the first item was uprooted⁶ and the second item faced public objections⁷. The last item became the most contentious issue.

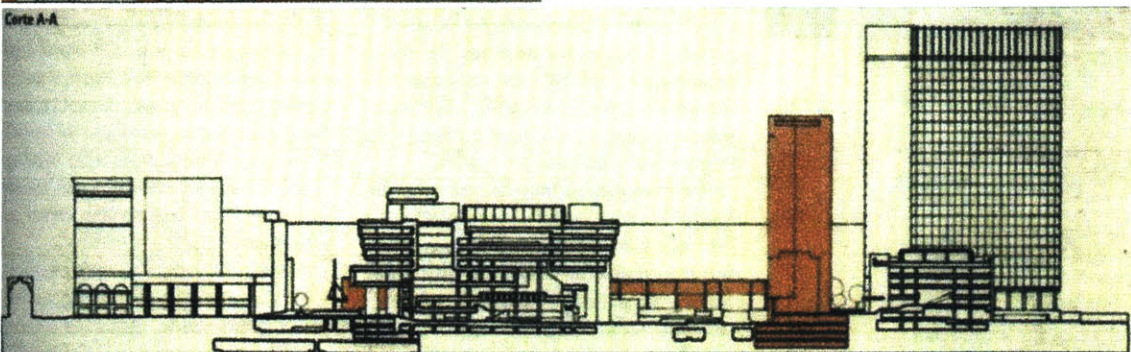


Figure 46: The proposal by Alex Krieger

Source: Projecto Design, July 1997

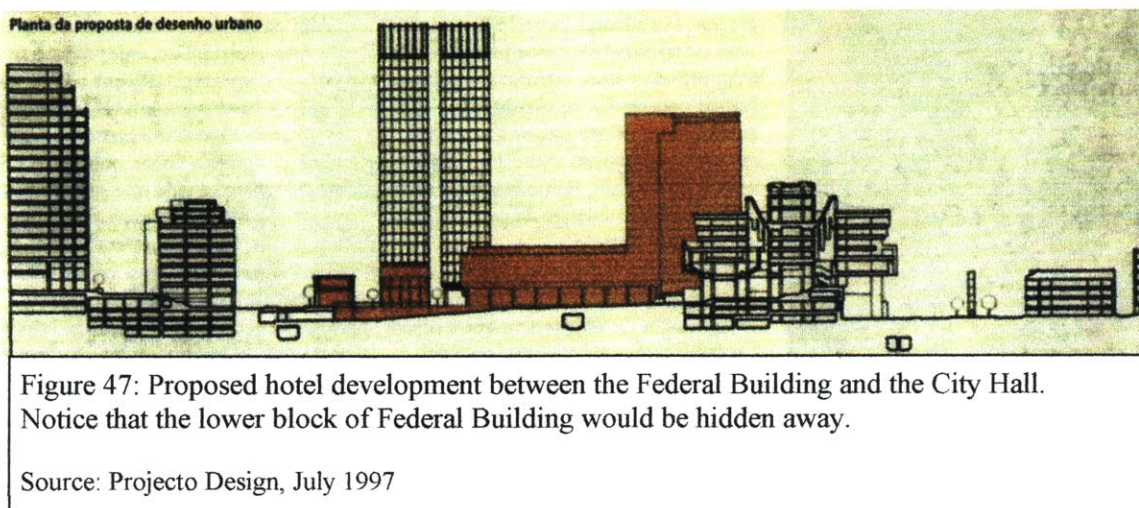
⁵ The Boston Globe Editorial dated December 25 1995, Friday City Edition pp.25

⁶ The plans for a music-filled garden inspired by the cellist Yo-Yo Ma was uprooted because of scheduling conflicts and difficulty in raising funds. On 29 November 1999, the Boston Globe reported that 'the beautiful project was built in Toronto'.

⁷ The pedestrian, preservationist and neighborhood groups questioned the objectives for constructing the bridge and criticized that it would be unsightly and unnecessary. The proposal for pedestrian bridge was shelved in 1998.

The Proposed Hotel and Parking Garages

The proposed 350-room hotel would include parking garages⁸. The development was envisioned to encourage use of the plaza on nights and weekends when government workers are at home. It would capitalize its location next to places of activities and on the existing infrastructure, i.e. the Blue Line that connects directly to the airport⁹. Shops and restaurants were proposed at the ground floor to generate activities.



As the hotel was the major source of revenue to improve and maintain the plaza, the project was moved quickly. The requests for proposals were sent out 4 months after the first presentation.

On 27 March 1997, i.e. 7 months after the RFP was sent out, the Trust announced the award of the site to Interstate Hotels and developer Carpenter & Company¹⁰. Interstate Hotels was one of the nation's largest independent hotel operators. The hotel developer was Richard L Friedman.

After the award, the project stalled for two and a half years before the plaza revitalization plan was replaced without mentioning the hotel development. The major cause was the feud between the Trust and BRA on one side and the hotel development's neighbor, the Federal Building, and in particular, the General Services Administration (GSA) who was overseeing the federal properties on the other.

⁸ Is this another formula borrowed from the PO Square project?

⁹ The site is within walking distance to major attractions such as North End and Faneuil Hall Marketplace.

¹⁰ The Cambridge-based firm that built the Charles Hotel and the Hyatt Regency.

The Feud with an Unhappy Neighbor

The main reason for the feud was that even though GSA and Federal Building would be directly affected by the proposal, they have been excluded from the plaza revitalization plan. GSA had repeatedly¹¹ held that the city and the Trust have not been listening to their objections and have been including them in the decisions made about the plaza¹². The then BRA Director, Thomas O'Brien replied that 'the GSA had sent "mixed signals" about whether it wanted to participate in the planning or merely obstruct the city's plans [for it] "has never shown much concern for the plaza until now"; the agency replaced the bricks in front of the JFK building with asphalt, for example, and spent \$ 80 million on internal renovations at what many consider one of the uglier buildings in Boston, without making outside improvements or consulting the city'¹³.

At the very beginning of the process, GSA has threatened to take legal actions to stop the projects if their views and objections were not considered. However, the city and the Trust have proceeded with the project. In order to get themselves heard and into the chain of processes, GSA then resorted to other tactics.

They questioned the necessity for the hotel development in the plaza revitalization project and wondered why BRA gave initial approval to the proposed hotel without so much as a study on the project's impact. In defense, the Trust's President, Catherine Donaher reiterated that 'the project was the only possible source to generate revenue'¹⁴ that will go directly to undertake capital improvements for the rest of the plaza and to underwrite maintenance and operation expenses. Donaher also noted that 'in an era of tax revolts and budget cutbacks, public-private partnerships like the trust are needed for public spaces to prosper.'¹⁵

GSA claimed that the development would affect the "light, air and access" to the Federal Building due to two main reasons. Firstly, the expected 24-story hotel was too tall. Secondly, located within 75 feet from the Federal Building in order to accommodate an underground garage, the proposed hotel would be too near the Federal Building. At first, these concerns were ignored. However, when BRA had found out that 'under a 30-year-old Urban Development agreement, [GSA/federal government] could block construction of any structure within 75 feet of the Federal Building'¹⁶, the hotel development was 'moved' to 106 feet away from the Federal Building.

¹¹ CHACON, Richard Chacon An article on 'Foes Make Federal Case Out of Plaza Plan' in The Boston Globe February 26, 1997, Wednesday, City Edition pp.B1

¹² 'The trust has also been accused of failing to include government or community leaders among its top tier of decision-makers. Trust executives deny the charges and say the group's committees contain people from various fields of expertise.' Ibid.

¹³ FLINT, Anthony An article on 'City Plan Seeks Plaza Pizzazz; Construction ideas are Wide-ranging' in The Boston Globe August 6, 1997, Wednesday, City Edition pp.A1

¹⁴ The amount of up-front money that for the 15 years lease, successful developer was willing to pay was \$750,000 in pre-development costs and \$5 million for other plaza improvements.

¹⁵ KINDLEBERGER, Richard An article on 'Critics Emerging on Overhaul of City Hall Plaza' in The Boston Globe February 5, 1997, Wednesday, City Edition pp.A1

¹⁶ *ibid.*

GSA executives also accused the Trust of working in an unusually secretive manner, which led the critics to complain that the business-dominated trust was moving to turn over public land to private enterprise without enough scrutiny or public involvement. Donaher replied that they have 'dealt with the public all along, [by] bringing civic, environmental and professional groups into the planning process. The Boston Civic Design Commission, the BRA and a committee of the City Council have favorably received the general plan.

To increase participation, forums¹⁷ were held to present plans to the public; A Civic Advisory Committee (CAC)¹⁸ was set up by the mayor to review plans for redesign of the Government Center parcel and advise the BRA about future renovation projects, including the proposed 350-room hotel project; and, the BRA appointed former Boston Garden President Lawrence C. Moulter on 3 April 1997 as the chairman of a new Citizens Advisory Board to ensure proper public input into the project.



Figure 48: City Hall Plaza
The area between City Hall and the Federal Building has a simple landscape.

Between 1995 and 1998, more than 100 public meetings were held to hear the concerns and goals of community groups, design consultants, and related officials from both the public and private sector. A few committees were formed, including a panel of independent reviewers to review 'and guide' the redevelopment proposals. The Trust's recommendations were adopted in the Mayor's office's Final Report on the Plaza's redevelopment in 1999.

When GSA lobbied at the federal government levels to put a stop to the project, the Trust and the Menino

administration have also enlisted members of the US Senate and House to put pressure on the federal GSA to drop its opposition to the hotel.¹⁹ The hotel developer, Friedman was also reported to have used 'some political clout [by] tapping two senator friends to weigh in on the hotel plan with GSA officials, and he would play genial host to then US President Clinton, providing a free three-week vacation on his lush 20-acre Edgartown estate; while back on the mainland, he was pushing for his projects whose success hinges on federal approvals'.²⁰

¹⁷ An article on 'City Hall Plan is Forum Focus' in *The Boston Globe* February 12, 1997, Wednesday, City Edition pp.C8

¹⁸ CHANCON, Richard An article on 'City Hall Plaza Redesign?' in *The Boston Globe* May 8, 1997, Thursday, City Edition

¹⁹ *The Boston Globe* Editorial titled 'Commotion on City Hall Plaza' April 22, 1997, Tuesday, City Edition pp. A14

²⁰ MIGA, Andrew An article on ' Clintons' Host Knows Value of Friends' in *The Boston Herald* August 14, 1997 Thursday All Editions News pp.4

When the political strategy failed, GSA sought help from the US attorney general's (AG's)²¹ office. The AG's office observed that Article 97 in the state constitution required a two-thirds vote of the House and Senate before any significant changes can be made in the use of land taken by eminent domain for open space. Since the plaza fell into this category and the city of Boston and the BRA have not received specific legislative approval for proposed alterations of City Hall Plaza, Boston would violate the state constitution by building a hotel there.

A letter was sent on 30 June 1997 asking the Menino administration to turn over information on ownership of the 11-acre plaza and to defend itself against the federal officials' allegation. On 19 December 1997, Attorney General Scott Harshbarger ruled that adding a new use was considered a significant change; therefore, it required a two-thirds vote of the Legislature. From my understanding of this case, this issue is still left unresolved.

GSA also surfaced another approval process that was required when it got 'the city councilors to demand a larger role in the project, including the power to approve the hotel and other aspects of the redesign'²². The question was whether the project would constitute a minor or major change to the plaza. O'Brien then asked 'the City Council to vote on the matter at the end of the year ... but he stopped short of saying whether the council would have the authority to veto or modify the plaza project'²³

By the end of 1997²⁴, the GSA got what they wanted. The BRA met with them behind closed doors to discuss the revitalization plan and agreed to jointly conduct public meetings in a new forum²⁵. A 5-members panel²⁶ that was referred to as the Citizens Advisory Panel (CAP) would chair this forum. CAP was inaugurated on 2 April 1998 and charged with assessing the proposals to renovate the plaza and recommending a process that gets the public involved. Following that CAC was suspended.

The Illusive Plans

Another major problem with the revitalization proposal was that it did not have a proper urban design plan from the beginning of the process. Furthermore, many of its subsequent plans were never firmed up.

²¹ ANAND, Geeta An article on 'US Attorney's Office Says City May Flout State Constitution with Hotel' in The Boston Globe July 10, 1997, Thursday, City Edition pp.B5

²² CHACON, Richard An article on 'US Officials Seek Closer Look at City Hall Plaza Hotel Plan' in The Boston Globe April 3, 1997, Thursday, City Edition pp. B2. 'The distinction between a major and minor modification is important because under the Urban Renewal Plan, a nearly 40-year-old agreement that paved the way for the construction of Government Center, "major" changes require local approval by the City Council, but minor ones need permission only from the BRA.'

²³ CHANCON, Richard An article on 'Council to Vote on City Hall Plaza Redesign; BRA Changes its Strategy on Hotel Plan' in The Boston Globe May 10, 1997, Saturday, City Edition pp.B1

²⁴ VENNOCHI, Joan An article on 'Closed-door Policy' in The Boston Globe December 3 1997, Wednesday City Edition pp.D1

²⁵ MEYERS, Jack An article on 'Feds, BRA agree to open meetings on plaza plan' in The Boston Herald December 3, 1997, Wednesday All Editions News pp.6

²⁶ The 5-members CAP was reduced to 4 members when one of them fell ill.

GSA had also made this observation; they said they could not comment on the 'plans' in the beginning because they were assured that the proposed hotel site had not been fixed. They could only raised their objections after they were certain that the hotel would indeed be located next to the Federal Building. The reason for not having a proper plan was attributed to the Trust not having a full-time architect. By the summer 1997, i.e. two years into the project, the revitalization project has only a conceptual design plan. Therefore, when the total plan was released²⁷ on 5 August 1997, the Boston Globe reported that 'since the idea of revamping City Hall Plaza was first aired about a year ago, that was the first time that the public amenities has been laid out in detail'. The plan showed 'a new park, flowering trees, a fountain, a Harborlights-style tent, outdoor cafes, two new MBTA entrances, an enclosed "winter garden" and the hotel. This plan was part O'Brien's public relations effort to win support and counter federal officials in the Federal Building'. Then, BRA had not agreed to work with GSA.

10 months after the BRA and GSA agreed to work together²⁸, they came out with 'a comprehensive redesign of plaza buildings and programming'²⁹. The new plan was prepared by the Back Bay architectural firm Koetter Kim and Associates and the real estate consulting arm of Ernst and Young. The proposal that was revealed on 19 November 1998³⁰ showed that the low-rise section of the Federal Building was razed to make room for a hotel, office, and retail complex. This plan was also shelved about 2 months later. The Boston Globe reported that 'the city had abandoned plans for a private hotel and parking garage, and had instead proposed more modest steps to make the barren civic space more attractive and better-used'³¹. The report also mentioned that Senator Edward M. Kennedy was working on securing federal funds to finance the plaza improvements, doing away with the need for a hotel and a parking garage to produce the revenue for a renovation. This was the favored plan among 4 options that would be presented to the CAP.

The 'Arrogant' Implementer

However, it became apparent later that BRA was still considering and promoting the original option, while GSA preferred the no-hotel option. During the CAP meeting dated 4 March 1999, the then BRA's director, 'O'Brien produced a memo from Robert Peck, a Washington GSA official, that said a six-story hotel beside the low-rise part of the JFK building would be acceptable as one feature of plaza redesign.

²⁷ FLINT, Anthony An article on 'City Plan Seeks Plaza Pizzazz; Construction ideas are Wide-ranging' in The Boston Globe August 6, 1997, Wednesday, City Edition pp.A1

²⁸ FLINT, Anthony An article on Plan would raze part of JFK Building for complex' in The Boston Globe April 24, 1998, Friday, City Edition pp.A1

²⁹ The Boston Globe Editorial dated January 11, 1999, Monday, City Edition pp.A14

³⁰ VENNOCHI, Joan An article on 'Too much of wrong thing; New scheme for City Hall Plaza will likely derail its redevelopment' in The Boston Globe November 25, 1998, Wednesday, City Edition pp.D1

³¹ FLINT, Anthony An article on 'City Scales Back Plans for Redesign of Plaza' in The Boston Globe January 27, 1999, Wednesday, City Edition pp.B1

But GSA regional director Robert Dunfey refuted that fact and said that memo "was not a commitment"³². It was obvious that tensions and frustrations were still there between the BRA and GSA.

This made CAP's job tougher since not only do they have to carry out their duties, they also have to act as an arbitrator to the feuding parties.

In an attempt to forge the project ahead, CAP recommended to the mayor, Menino to 'do something now - anything, even modest changes - to improve the barren civic space. ... If no action was taken, it is unlikely that any city leader will touch this problem for another generation'³³.

They suggested some immediate short-term measures such as re-establishing Hanover Street, getting the Parks Department to establish year-round program such as festivals and flea markets, and getting the federal bureaucrats to spruce up the street-level facade of the Federal Building.

However, they did not rule out the possibility of allowing a small building to be placed in front of the Federal Building if the building's edge was not improved. They also suggested forming a new version of the Trust called 'Friends of City Hall Plaza' to solicit maintenance funding from surrounding businesses.

On 26 July 1999, the Boston Globe³⁴ reported that BRA and the Trust had run directly counter to or simply ignored the CAP's blueprint by presenting their own plans based largely on the original plan for the plaza. In October that year³⁵, Mayor Menino forced O'Brien to resign and placed the negotiations on the plaza in the hands of his top aide, Peter Welsh.

After that incident, the city and the GSA seemed to be able to work better together. On 16 December 1999, the mayor announced a new \$27.5 million plan to redesign City Hall Plaza, which had been agreed to by city, state, and federal officials, ending years of frustration and turf battles³⁶. Finally, there was a concrete plan for the revitalization effort even if the plan would only constitute Phase I of the redevelopment. It seemed that something would finally be done to make the plaza a better place. However, the turbulent days were far from being over.

³² FLINT, Anthony An article on 'GSA is Criticized on Plaza Plans' in The Boston Globe March 5, 1999, Friday, City Edition pp B3

³³ FLINT, Anthony An article on 'Panel Wants Activity on City Hall Plaza' in The Boston Globe May 15, 1999, Saturday, City Edition ppB4

³⁴ MEYERS, Jack An article on 'City Hall Plaza Report Ignored by Administration' in The Boston Herald July 26, 1999 Monday, All Editions News pp.12

³⁵ FLINT, Anthony An article on 'City Hall Plaza Redesign Is OK'd Modest Makeover to be Announced' in The Boston Globe December 15, 1999, Wednesday, Third Edition pp.A38

³⁶ FLINT, Anthony An article on 'City Hall Plaza to Get \$27.5M Renovation' in The Boston Globe December 17, 1999, Friday, Third Edition pp.B3

The Feud with the Councilors

Six months after the announcement³⁷, several city councilors said the plan was incomplete. In effect, these city councilors were concerned that the city would still be pursuing the proposal for hotel development.

The city councilors claimed that if the plan were allowed to proceed, the result would be a half finished design since no plans have been made for Phase II of the project. The councilors also called for a review of the Boston Redevelopment Authority's control of the property.

They disputed the fact that BRA has the right to retain control and avoid council oversight. It demanded the BRA turn over its documents from the 1964 vote so they may be reviewed to find whether the agency should be able to continue its plans without approval from the council.

Mayor Menino³⁸ dismissed the accusations saying that the city has taken over the Plaza in 1964 as part of an urban renewal plan approved by the then nine-member council; in the approval, council's actions are not required for minor improvements that included the building of an arcade; and the ownership of the plaza was transferred from the city to the BRA under the terms of 1964 urban renewal legislation.

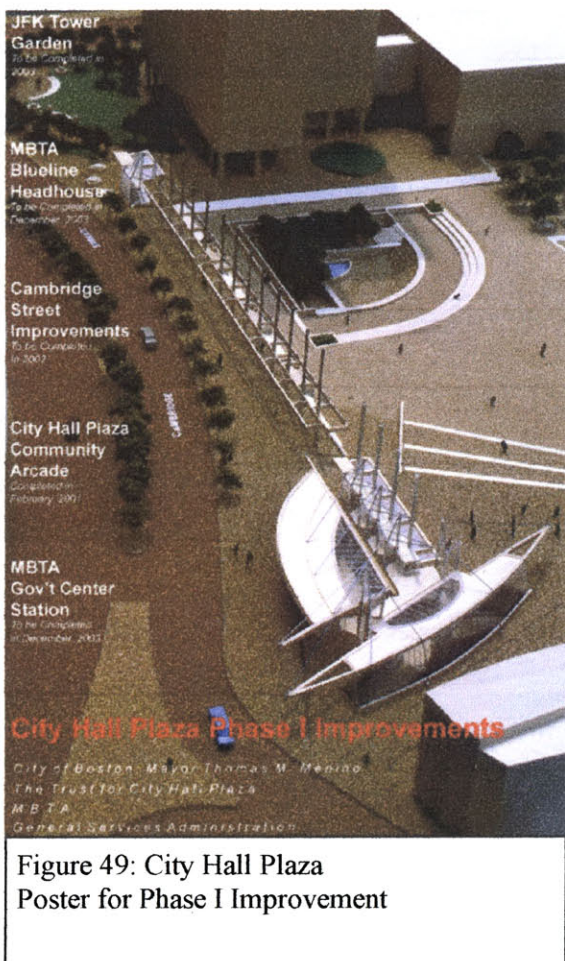


Figure 49: City Hall Plaza
Poster for Phase I Improvement

The mayor pushed ahead with his plans to reshape City Hall Plaza, i.e. the construction of a \$2.7 million arcade, featuring a wooden trellis, several public-seating platforms, and a row of light posts. The arcade will play host to farmers' markets, art exhibits, and musical performances. When the arcade neared its completion, the BRA called artists to design banners for the opening celebrations. The grand opening of the Community Arcade was held on 1 February 2001.

³⁷ BOLLMAN, Amber An article on 'Councilors Question BRA Plans for Plaza Officials Say Redesign Plan Incomplete' in *The Boston Globe* June 2, 2000, Friday, Third Edition pp.B4

³⁸ BOLLMAN, Amber An article on 'Menino Vows to Renovate City Plaza' in *The Boston Globe* June 3, 2000, Saturday, Third Edition pp.B7

The council then decided to seek a legal opinion³⁹ on the way the city has taken over the land. The council also decided to call for a public hearing to audit the city's spending⁴⁰ on City Hall Plaza that had amounted to \$7 million. These matters have yet to be fully resolved.

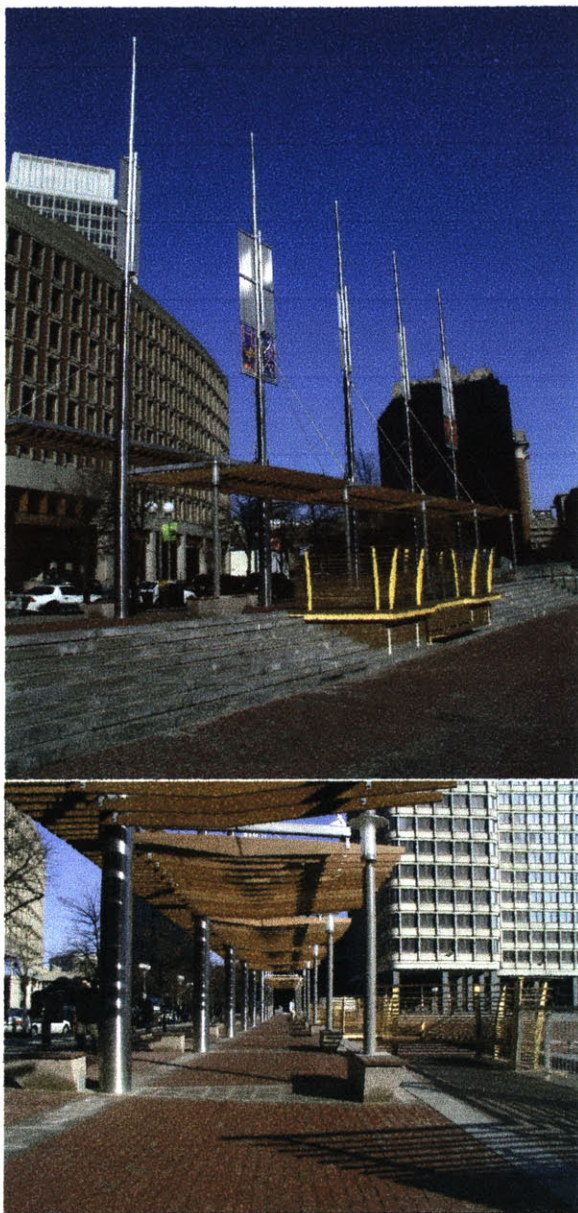


Figure 50: City Hall Plaza
Only the arcade has been completed.

Update on the Not so Final Plan

The Phase I of plaza redevelopment plan has three important elements: an arcade along Cambridge Street, improvement to MBTA's Government Center's Station, and revitalization of numerous smaller areas at the base of the Federal Building. To date, only the arcade with 13 nautically influenced light poles and some open market space along Cambridge Street have been baffling pedestrians.

The MBTA has proposed an initiative to redesign its Government Center train station. The capital improvement program that would replace the brick bunker at the southwest corner of the plaza was estimated to cost \$20 million. The new station was scheduled to begin construction in December of 2001 and will be fully completed by 2003. There is no sign of construction activities yet

There would be a \$6 million park similar in size with the PO Square located in front of the Cambridge Street entrance to the JFK building. This project is in the midst of the planning stages and the GSA has submitted a request for federal funding to help carry out its goals. Pending the approval of federal funds, a more detailed design plan will be developed in 2002 and construction should be underway by 2003.

³⁹ EBBERT, Stephanie An article on 'Council Agrees to Hire Lawyer' in The Boston Globe March 29, 2001, Thursday, Third Edition pp.B2

⁴⁰ The Boston Globe 'New England in Brief/Boston; Council Wants Hearing on Plaza Costs' April 26, 2001, Thursday, Third Edition pp.B2



Figure 51: City Hall Plaza
May be certain public spaces need not be active all the time. They are meant for big crowd gatherings and for certain events.

The Boston Herald reported that, based on the records from the city and the Trust, the revitalization effort has swallowed up nearly \$7 million in public and private money. The trust alone has spent about \$3.5 million in public funds since it was created in 1995, bolstered by \$884,000 in grant money from the city.

Lessons learnt

What works for one site does not necessarily work for another because every site is unique and may need a different approach to revitalization.

While having a non-profit self-sufficient organization was good, the mistake was not getting everyone of the stakeholders involved and engaged in the redevelopment plans. There was too much politics involved in this project. The Trust itself is political.

The project needs a non-political and self-participatory organization like BID. Then, the stakeholders directly affected by the plaza would have to contribute to a fund to make improvements. It would help formulate a common vision for the varied parties and set common goals. A BID set-up would facilitate the negotiation process between the stakeholders. There is merit to have a proper urban design plan.

"This hasn't been a public participation process. It's been a public relations process."

- Shirley Kessel

The landscape architect, who was refused entry to a meeting.

Chapter 9 Capital Center and Downcity Plans, Providence

Introduction

Today, the 'center' of downtown Providence is located at the confluence of three rivers, Woonasquatucket River on the west, Moshassuck River to the north, and the previous Great Salt River, which is now called the Providence River, on the south. The major part of the downtown lies on the western side of the river, an area reclaimed from the previous Great Salt Cove. But, the earliest settlement had started as a 'colonial village' in 1636 on the eastern side of the river¹.

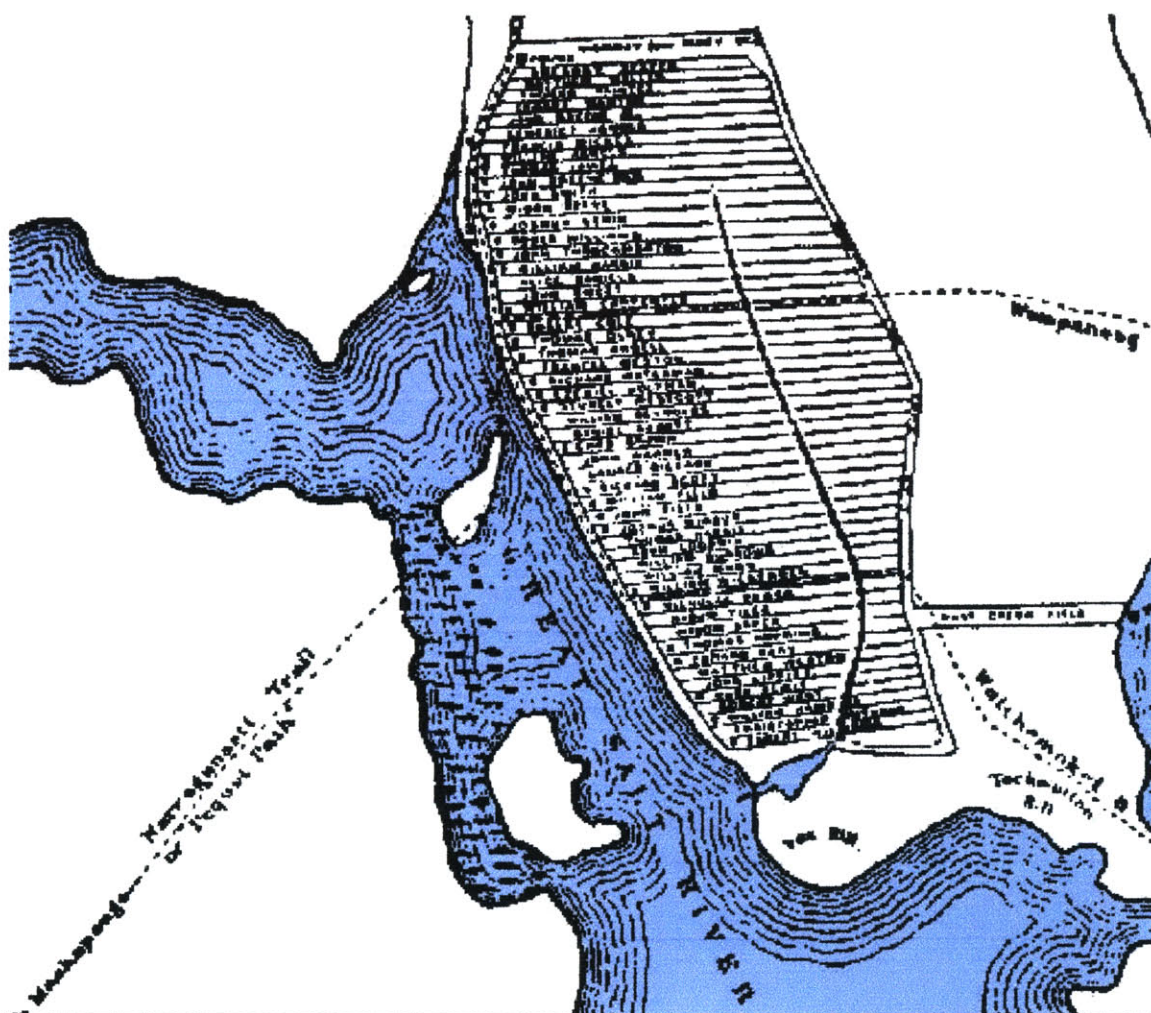


Figure 52: 'Providence'
The 'Colonial Village' circa 1650

Source: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission (RIHPC)

¹ VANDERMILLEN, James 1996 Thesis on 'Rediscovering Downtown: Strategies for the Future of Providence' submitted to Department of Urban Studies and Planning

The shift of the commercial center from the east to the west was largely due to the economic development. By the late 1770s, Providence was an important shipping port. There was pressure for development. To address the need, landfill was carried out on the western side of the river to pave way for two major roads, the Broad/Weybosset Street and Westminster Streets, new developments and wharfs.

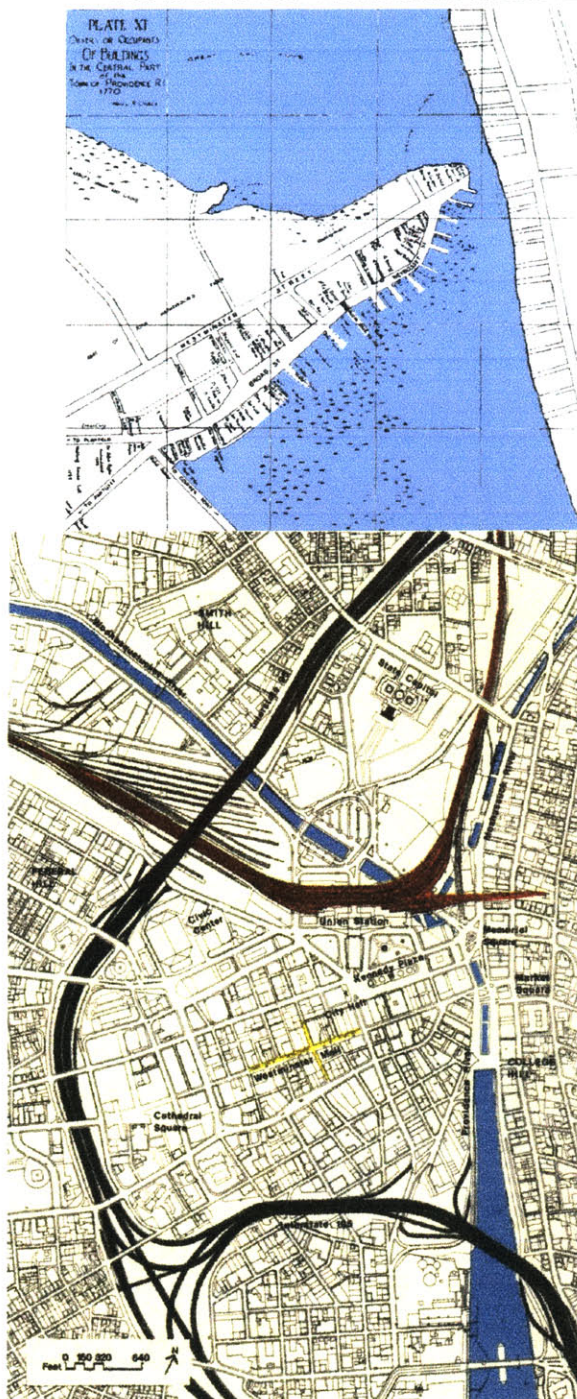


Figure 53: Providence at 1770s and 1970s

Source: RIHPC and Howes (1974)

The industrial revolution that replaced the shipping industries in the early 1800s made a greater impact on the development of Providence; the town became a city in 1831. By the late 1800s, the current street patterns were established. Providence became a financial center and a regional destination providing culture, entertainment and consumer activities. Rail lines connected it to cities as far as Boston.

After World War II, Providence lost its regional primacy status for textile, jewelry and machine tools. As industry moved out, so did the residents. Extensive subdivisions in nearby towns for the suburban single-family homes drew more residents away. After the residents left downtown, the retailers followed.

By 1970, there was a significant loss of both residents and industries. The city has no waterfront as the river had been covered extensively to make way for the roads and rails. Mass clearance² and demolition of downtown buildings for car parking and major infrastructure works had scarred the downtown's environments. The heart of downtown experienced depression and was in great need for revitalization.

² The recommendation in the 1959's Downtown Providence 1970 plan, which was sponsored by the Downtown Business Coordinating Council, was to replace historic buildings with modern structures and plazas.

Setting up the Stage

The interest to chart the future of downtown started when the largest insurance group relocated to a neighboring city, two of the largest department stores closed their downtown flagship stores, and the judicial system planned to locate the state court not in the downtown but to the suburbs. The loss of both private and public sector interests sent a wake up call to the city.

Relocating the Railroad Tracks

In the fall of 1973, a small group of business community approached the then mayor Doorley to form a public-private partnership with the city. The result was the



Figure 54: Providence 1970s
The river was decked up (middle left) and the city was cut by rail tracks (right).

Source: Howes, 1974

formation of Providence Foundation (PF), a non-profit organization that was affiliated to the Chamber of Commerce and received administrative support from the city. Their goal was to create, plan and facilitate feasible downtown development projects that can then be implemented by others. PF hired Romolo 'Ronal' Marsella as its executive director in 1974.

However, the main catalyst for Providence's revitalization was the 'Interface Providence,' a 1974 publication by the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). The document set the discussions and efforts to relocate the Amtrak railroad tracks in motion, and 'generated debate over how to open up the city for development'³.

The revitalization effort's momentum gathered when Vincent (Buddy) Cianci, Jr. was elected as the new mayor in 1975. The mayor realigned the city politics and promoted the redevelopment proposals with rigor in his three terms in office.

Within his first term, and with PF's help, he managed to retain the state court in Providence, which led to the building of Governor Garrahy Court Building on Dorrance Street, and saw three small⁴ but significant projects being completed. He convinced the locals that they could gather unconventional resources to get things done.

³ MOTTE, Mark T and WEIL, Lawrence A 2000 An article on 'Of Railroads and Regime Shifts: Downtown Renewal in Providence, Rhode Island' in *Cities* Volume 17 No.1, Elsevier Science Great Britain pp.7-18

⁴ They were the renovation of Biltmore Hotel, saving of Loews Theatre for Providence Performing Arts Center and refurbishment of the Providence Arcade.

By 1978, PF with the support of the Mayor's Executive Office and Office of Community Development developed a more ambitious vision for downtown that was drawn from the Interface Providence and a \$5000 feasibility study to assess the potential cost of moving the railroad tracks.

The study showed that the federal government's \$15million budget was potentially enough to cover the cost.

On October 1978, PF reported the results in an ad-hoc⁵ meeting between Senator

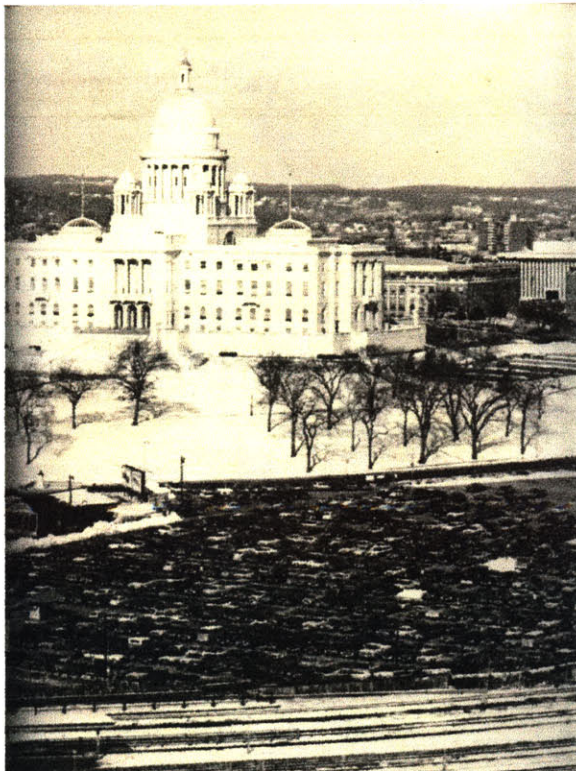


Figure 55: Providence 1970s
Roads, cars and rails were the common sight in downtown Providence.

Source: Howes, 1974

Claiborne Pell, Governor Garrahy, Mayor Ciancci, Marsella and Bruce Sundlun on October 1978. Pell then lobbied the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to consider a redirection of the funding.

When PF demonstrated the physical and financial feasibilities, US Department of Transportation (DOT) conditionally approved the track relocation.

In January of 1982, the federal, state and private landowners signed a Cooperative Design and Construction Agreement; FRA money was secured; and, physical design work on track realignment commenced.

The new area was called the Capital Center in 1978⁶. By 1983, enabling legislation from the City and State had created the Capital Center District, with governing representatives of the Mayor, the Governor and the PF. However, there was still another infrastructure that would be considered, i.e. the rivers.

⁵ Senator Pell happened to be in town on that day.

⁶ At a PF executive Board Meeting held in October 1978, Marsella used this name as part of the announcement on the success of track relocation deal. The Providence Journal and the Mayor's office quickly adopted it.

River Relocation Plan

When Providence's American Institute of Architects (AIA) Design Committee disbanded after failing to get the city to provide more open spaces, its ex-chairman William Warner met with then director of the Department of Environmental Management, Bob Bendick to discuss the opportunity to design a plan that just focus on the water. Warner and Bendick then sought PF to sponsor the study.

Later, PF applied to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) program on urban design planning studies and was awarded a matching grant provided there was public participation in the process. This led to the start of the Providence Waterfront Study in May 1983, which 'never really finished ...⁷.

The study made proposal for four waterfront areas, which are the Seekonk River, Fox and India Points, the Old Harbor and the rivers around Capital Center. The State Department of Transportation looked at the preliminary proposals for Capital Center and believed that 'there was significant transportation benefits, because what it basically did

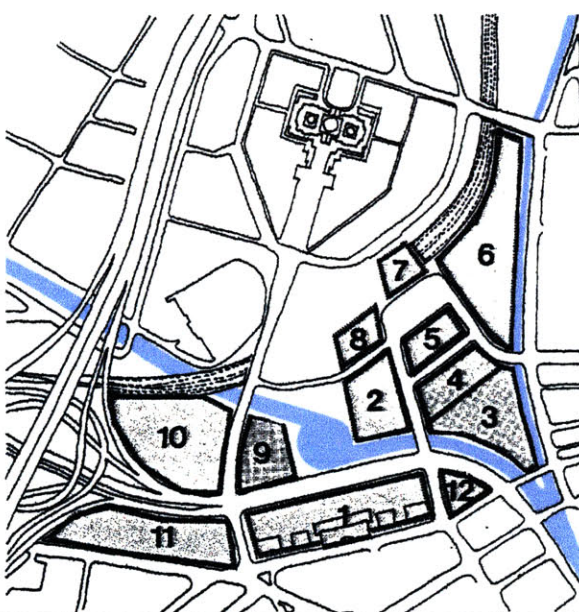


Figure 56: Capital Center
The infrastructure works yielded twelve new developable parcels.

Source: CARR & LEVINE, 1986

transportation-wise was extend Memorial Boulevard, where the Capital Center plan had previously ended it at "Suicide Circle" (Rhode Islanders' nickname for Memorial Square). ... By pulling the rivers to the outside of the Boulevard, we were able to give the rivers definition, open them up, relocate the confluence in the middle of that wonderful corridor between the East Side and the Financial District, rather than leave it in obscurity behind the post office. So in effect we corrected some of the sins of the past.⁸

The plan eventually became officially known as the Memorial Boulevard extension project. It was later popularized as River Relocation Project.

Moving the tracks and placing them underground and the river relocation project opened up over 60 acres of land for new developments.

⁷ Warner in the interview for an article on 'A Conversation with ... River Mover William Warner' by CASTELLUCCI, John *The Providence Journal-Bulletin* July 24, 1995, Monday, Metro Edition pp.1C

⁸ *ibid.* Warner explained the sins of the past as "The final segment of the world's widest bridge (the Crawford Street bridge, which used to stretch from Crawford to Memorial Square) was the building of the post office in 1940 over the Providence River at its confluence."

Providence Development Strategy Report (1986)

While tracks and river was being realigned and relocated, Carr, Lynch Associates, Inc and Melvin F Levine & Associates, Inc. was preparing the 'Providence Development Strategy Report' for the City of Providence's Department of Planning and Development. The consultants observed that Capital Center Project and River Relocation Plan would 'help to create the sense of a city on the move and of new development opportunities,' but had doubts on how these projects will benefit the downtown.

They recommended financial and institutional inventions as the key components of the development strategy; saying that there was a need for an aggressive management to fill the downtown with activities since it already had the 'superstructure'.

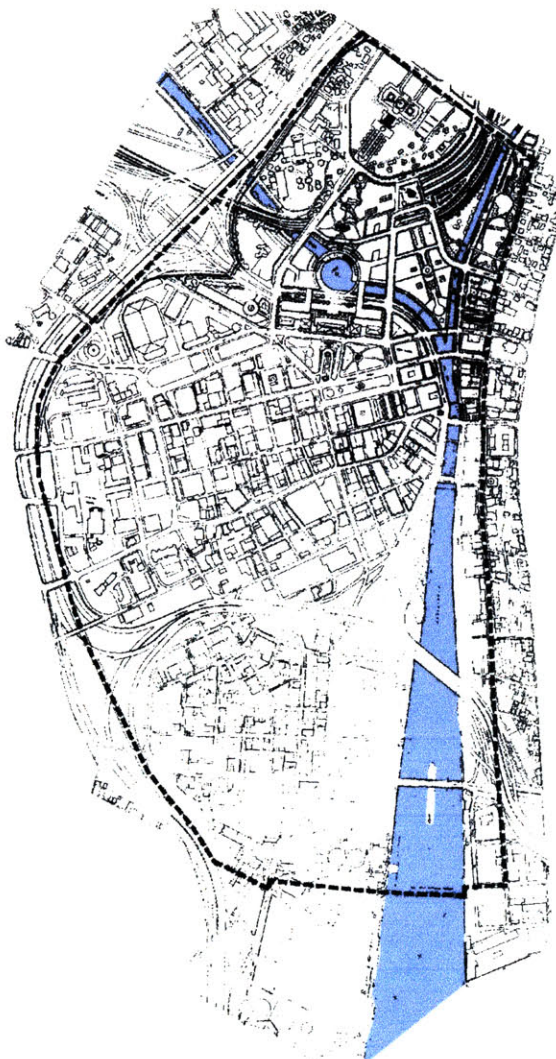


Figure 57: Providence 1980s
Realigning the rails and placing them
underground create new developable parcels.

Source: CARR & LEVINE, 1986

They also recommended that 'a vigorous and imaginative sales campaign was needed in order to make corporate decision-makers aware of the advantages of downtown providence so that it can compete more effectively for its share of the regional market'.

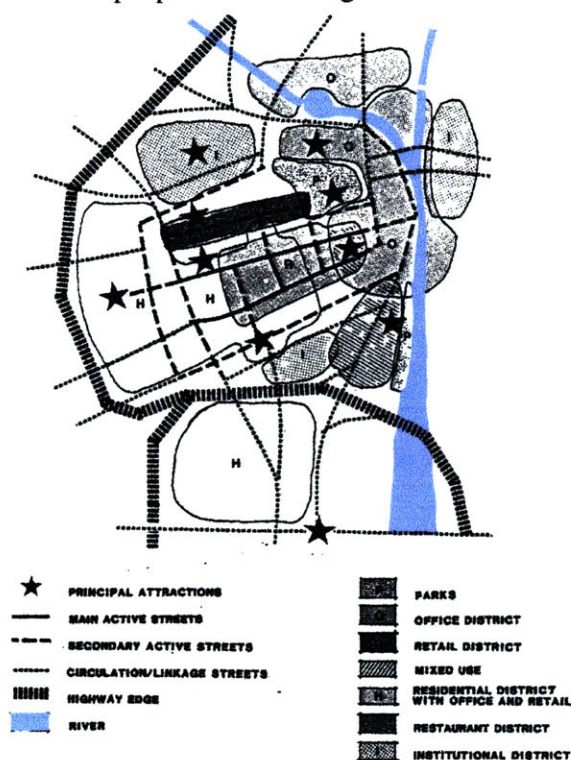
They noted then that 'while Downtown Providence Improvement Association (DPIA) and the PF have undertaken some maintenance and marketing activities capably, there is no organization that exists at that time with a structure that could accommodate the activities which will be required to implement a development strategy.'

Thus, they recommended the city to create a new entity to manage the Downtown Development Strategy, which they called "The Providence Company" (PC).

PC was conceived as a non-profit organization that would function as an arm of the Department of Planning and Development and be accountable to a board appointed by the Mayor. Their functions include providing marketing, development packaging and management services.

To fund PC, they recommended a two-prong strategy. The primary source would come from the Downtown Tax Increment District; this income would be based on reevaluation and projected new development. In the later part of the fifteen-year period, tax increment would be partially replaced by 'common area' and promotion payments from retail establishments, or income from a special assessment districts. However, the above proposal was not adopted. What the city had adopted was the objective to make downtown Providence a better place in which to work, to do business, to live and to enjoy life. It proposed to strengthen and revive the downtown as the center of economic and

cultural life of Providence by offering amenities and activities desired by potential employers, residents and visitors. The recommendations for new developments were focused on the downtown core. The center of activities for the downtown was envisioned to be located on Westminster Street that would anchor the retail activities; hence, the proposal to pedestrian the street⁹.



DOWNTOWN PROVIDENCE
FUTURE IMAGE - 2000

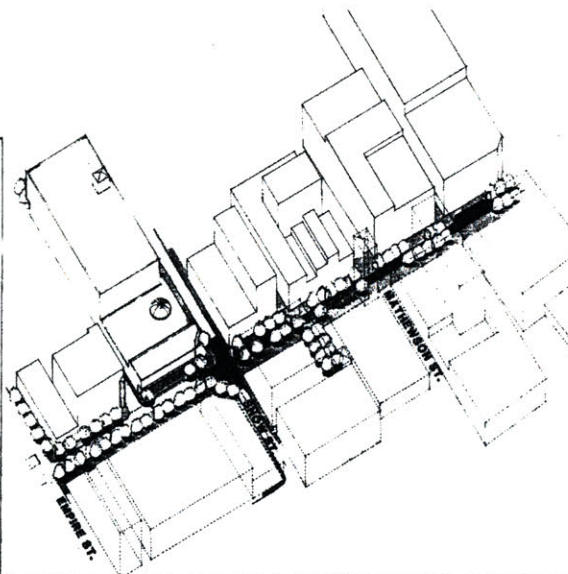
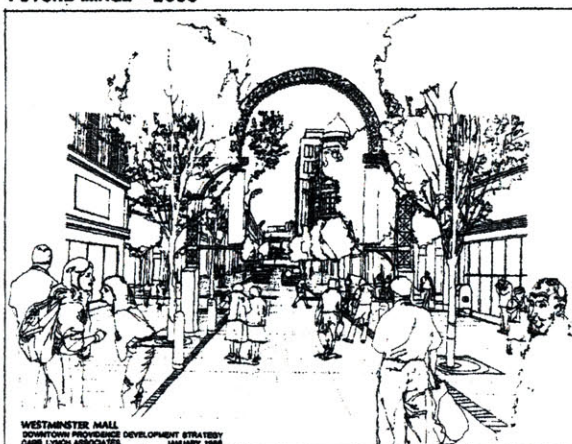


Figure 58: Providence Development Strategy Report, 1986
The main strategy was to bring activities back to the heart of downtown at Westminster Street.

Source: CARR & LEVINE, 1986

Projects as Catalysts?

Three significant developments were built by the tail end of the 1980s east coast real estate boom. They were: the new headquarters of Citizens Bank that was located at

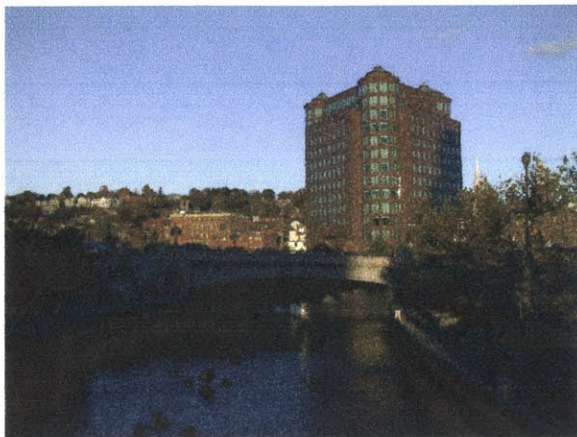


Figure 59: Citizens Bank, Providence

the new confluence of the relocated rivers, Center Place that was a speculative luxury condominium project funded by the Harvard University endowment; and One Gateway Plaza that housed the back of office functions of American Express.

The railroad tracks were successfully relocated and a new train station was opened in 1987. Within the next year, reconstruction works on highway ramps to link State Routes 6 and 10 and Interstate 95 directly to downtown were completed.

More Visions and Plans¹¹

Downcity¹² Providence: Master Plan for a Special Time

In November 1991, the City of Providence and the PF sponsored a 5-day public *charrette*, which was led Andres Duany, to re-examine and to create a viable future for downtown's old retail core. The report was later released on March 1992 as the 'Downcity Providence: Master Plan for a Special Time'. To achieve these objectives, the city would tap into three market segments: -

- a. The academic market that was already provided by the existing colleges and universities;
- b. The artist market to capitalize and build on the existing infrastructure provided by the two universities and the large number of artists and people involved in arts who like inexpensive space available in old retail and manufacturing buildings in downtown; and,
- c. The retirement market to capitalize on the image of the city as a 'college town par excellence, town living with metropolitan culture'.

The proposal was to apply both design and management strategies in the downtown revitalization.

¹¹ Duany expressed his amazement at the amount of planning that Providence has had since the 1960s. He wrote that on their first day there, they stacked those prior plans up in a pile. They found that not only did Providence have master plans for every decade; there were interim plans and then reports on the plans made at every few years.

¹² Duany (1992) After the affectionate name Rhode Islanders had given the old retail core in its heyday.

The design strategy would address issues such as developing more housing economically, administering parking effectively through proper signage, creating a hierarchy for streets to provide rational layout for driving while enhancing the experience of walking, adding 'liner buildings'¹³ back to the fabric of the city, carrying out preservation to the existing buildings, implementing a lighting program, creating synergy between the proposed mall at Capital Center and the existing retail activities along Westminster Street, and making small but critical interventions with three projects, Kennedy Plaza, Shepard's Building and Grace Church Plaza.

To manage the downtown, the plan called for the keeping of commitment of having students helping with the homeless and their security staff, as well as providing assistance to the police force by appointing them as deputies; and either expanding the role and responsibilities of the Providence Group¹⁴, a public-private partnership, to administer the proposals made or to from groups that can take over certain aspects of the plan. They stressed that either group 'must include the owners, the potential buyers of

downtown land, the potential renters, the artists, the bankers that might be interested in the small investments and so forth.'

Thomas Kohler, one of the consultants, proposed to set up a downtown agency that would be funded through public and private resources as the mechanism to effectively manage the variety of activities and programs.

The agency was proposed to address the development of housing, retail, convention and tourism and arts and education industries, and management of parking and street maintenance as well as carrying out marketing of downtown.

To stress his colleague's point, Michael Kinerk claimed that 'Providence did not need new buildings, new streets or rerouted traffic, it needed marketing', and illustrated how its history and arts could be promoted.

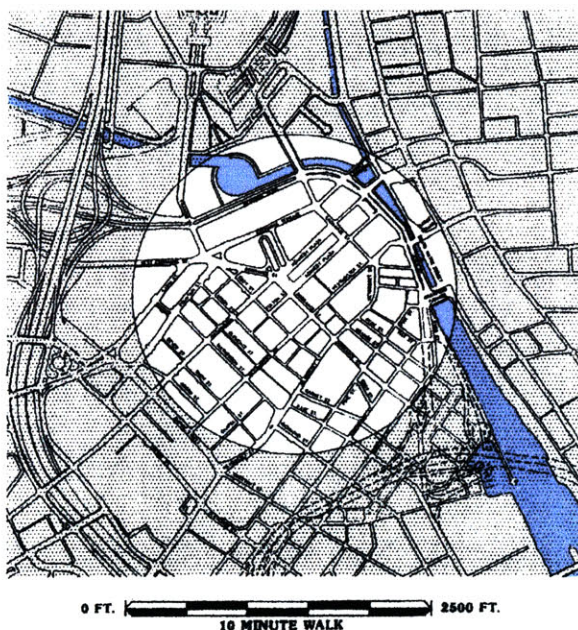


Figure 60: The Downcity Plan focused on the circular area that has its center at City Hall and a radius equal to the distance most people would walk in five minutes.

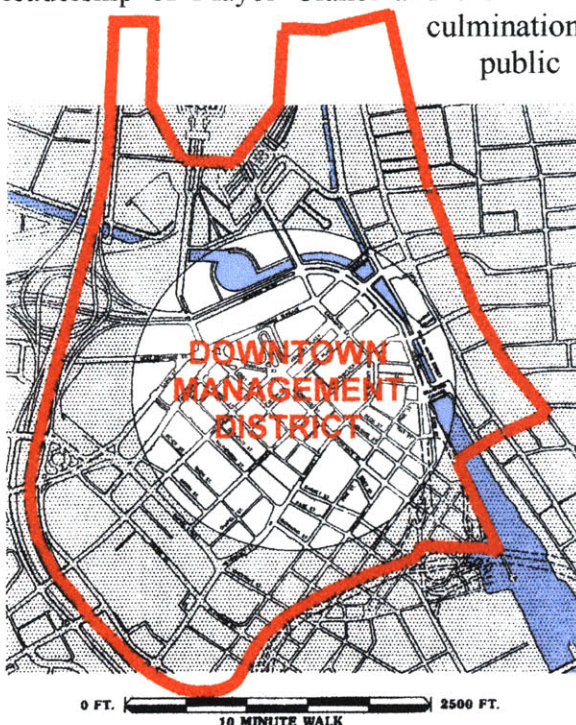
Source: DUANY & PLATER-ZYBERK, 1992

¹³ Urban blocks that are long and thin, sometimes fifteen feet wide. Duany proposed to place them 'in front of the parking lots, garages or blank walls to create decent urban streets'.

¹⁴ I think they meant the Providence Foundation.

Providence 2000: The Comprehensive Plan

The *charrette* and report were only one part of the city's comprehensive planning strategy. In July 1993, the Department of Planning and Development under the leadership of Mayor Cianci and the Providence City Plan Commission released the culmination of the extensive planning efforts through public meeting process that has evolved into the comprehensive plan for the city. The plan,



called Providence 2000, established a vision for the city, presented a guide for future growth and change in the city, set the city's policies for public and private actions in the following years, and set forth the program to achieve specific policies and actions. To carry out the plan, the city would rely on the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), a policy statement that served to establish the city's goals for capital development for a six-year period and offered the city a base from which future cost to the city can be programmed so that sound decisions can be made. The report only sought to improve and regulate the CIP process and not set out detailed programs.

POLICIES

1. Manage Downcity retail as if it were a mall.

ACTION	TIME FRAME	IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES	RESOURCES NEEDED
Downcity Management District			
1. Establish Downcity Management District, with defined authority and responsibilities, including: a. Centralize and control maintenance, security, promotional activities. b. Coordinate between public and private sectors on management issues.	Short term and ongoing	General Assembly, CC, Mayor, PF	Special legislation Funding (public and private sources, tax increment revenues, membership dues)
Sidewalk Uses			
1. Regulate sidewalk vendors by ordinance which licenses and prescribes locations for each.	Immediate and ongoing	DPW, CC	City Council Ordinance Enforcement
2. Establish permitting fees and increase fines for violations.	Immediate	CC, DPW	City Council Ordinance Enforcement
3. Regulate use of outdoor merchandise displays and seating areas.	Short term	General Assembly, CC, DPW	Special legislation City Council Ordinance Enforcement

Figure 61: The Downcity Implementation Plan
Finally, the proposal to manage the area as if it were a mall was adopted for implementation.

Source: CIANCI, 1994

Downcity Providence: Master Plan and Implementation Plan

Shortly after the charrette led by Duany was held, a Downcity Task Force with eleven advisory committees was set up to draft an implementation plan called Downcity Providence: An Implementation Plan. The plan was subsequently released on 1 January 1994. The report identified the specific actions needed to create a climate for investment; outlined regulations, programs and projects; assigned responsibilities; and established deadlines for implementation.

There were eight issues addressed in the report – circulation, parking, physical improvements, architectural and design standards, development strategies, arts and entertainment/festivals and events, social policies and management.

The Outcome

The mayor wrote that while the report was being drafted, the city had already started to realize the visions made in the earlier proposal, that included redirecting traffics, installation of new lightings, sidewalk improvements to Westminster and Mathewson Streets, and rehabilitation of old buildings. The mayor also reported that Rhode Island Convention Center had opened, the Westin Hotel was under construction, the Capital Center project, which would provide riverwalks and access to the beautiful waterfront, was nearly completed, and plans for Providence Place Mall was being pushed forward.

The Waterplace Park was finally completed in 1994 after five years of construction at a cost of \$143mil. The project consisted of a 4-acre park with a one-acre reservoir, several Venetian style bridges, an outdoor amphitheater, docking space for water taxis and cobblestone riverwalk. The architect, Warner said that the final proposal was result of a *charrette* held with William H. Whyte and discussions with the advisory committee.



Figure 62: Waterplace Park, Providence
The difference in levels is mediated by terraces.

Following Whyte's request for as many access as possible to the urban park, pedestrian access was provided using a concourse that connects Kennedy Plaza with the park under the Boulevard, and riverwalks were extended east on both sides of Waterplace to Steeple Street.

The park has to be sunken due to the technical requirements for the surrounding roads and developments to be located at a certain level to avoid flooding, making the difference between the mean high water and Park Row to be thirty-six feet. Warner made use of the 36-foot elevation difference to put in an amphitheater, and a two-story pavilion building with three terraces on the roofs that stepped down to the water. The design has several benefits; the place would be cool and quiet, one would not be conscious of the traffic; and the walls that support the Boulevard provide shades.

Although these projects were successful in opening up more land for redevelopment and making the landscaping more beautiful, the historic core of downtown, around Westminster Street still suffered. There were no major Downtown retail stores and activities. Vacancy rate was 20% with the worst in older core about 45%. Despite the enormous investments made around the edges of Downtown and the physical improvements made to the Westminster Street streetscape, the downtown continued to lose its struggle to hold on to retailers.

Enter the WaterFire¹⁵

By 1994, the stage has been set for much of Providence's acclaimed 'renaissance'. But Providence needed something extra to bring in the people. That something extra opened on 10th anniversary of First Night Providence.

The 'play' with a simple title, 'First Fire' consisted of three main items. Firstly, there was a series of sparkling bonfires with flickering firelight sending fragrant scents of aromatic wood smoke. Then, there were torch-lit vessels traveling up and down the river, and as they passed by the flames, silhouettes of the fire tenders could be seen dancing on the arched bridges. And lastly, there was the enchanting music from all over the world engaging the senses and emotions of those who stroll the paths and bridges of Waterplace Park.



Figure 63: WaterFire
Source: WaterFire website

The city had commissioned Barnaby Evans to conceptualize the interactive sculpture. Evans explained that WaterFire continued his works on a series of installations pieces that would involve precious objects and engage people with public spaces.

The 'Second Fire' performed in June 1996 to the thousands of participants from all over the world who had come for the International Sculpture Conference. It was then that Evans was convinced by ardent art supporters to create an on-going fire installation. WaterFire became an ongoing, nonprofit enterprise called WaterFire Providence (WP). It is funded by contributions from individuals, corporations, the city of Providence and the state of Rhode Island.

¹⁵ The official WaterFire website is located at <http://www.waterfire.com/>

When the first 42 braziers permanent installation opened in 1997, it attracted an estimated attendance of 350,000 people in its thirteen lightings. In response to growing attendance, WP has expanded in size to 81 braziers in 1998 and 97 braziers in 1999¹⁶. The installation was a success because people found it to be a special event. Later, Evans received the Renaissance Award from the City of Providence for his work as an artist and his role in revitalizing downtown Providence.

A 1997 study by Rhode Island Foundation showed that on the average a viewer would spend \$21 in a single visit. And, business on nights when event was stage for out-performed other nights. It was estimated that more than three million people have attended WP. The event was scheduled to play for the sixth year starting from Saturday, 4 May 2002. There would be twelve performances ending on Saturday, 5 October 2002. While the Millennium celebration gave it a renewed life in its third year, one wonders how long will the event sustain its novelty and last. Furthermore, the artist has since created similar installation in other cities.

The Other Outcomes

Providence Place Mall

One of the planning efforts since the 1986's Providence Development Strategy Report was the return to the retail-based strategy as the best hope for saving the downtown. The city had followed up on this matter closely. Shortly after the 1986 report was released, the then mayor Joseph Paolino, Jr. announced the preliminary plans for a retail development. This development later became the Providence Place Mall¹⁷. It would house Lord & Taylor, Filene's and Nordstrom among the 150 stores and restaurants and a 16-screen cinema.

Unfortunately, the project suffered a series of fits and starts; the opening date and cost of mall were changed repeatedly. For example, in 1990, the mall was expected to open in 1994. However, when the date arrived, the city had only managed to push the project forward on paper. Thus, the opening date was later pushed to 1997. And, by late 1997¹⁸, a series of setbacks left the project's financing in question. It was 'saved' by the once wildly profitable real estate firm, Capital America¹⁹, which provided a \$275 million construction loan to build the mall plus another \$5 million for a "contingency fund" in case of cost overruns. Less than a year later, it also experienced financial difficulty²⁰.

¹⁶ The 1999 season culminated in a special WaterFire lighting for the December 31 Millennium Celebrations. WaterFire's 2000 season was the biggest with more than thirty sponsors helped hosting twenty lightings from March to October.

¹⁷ This case could be a separate interesting study by itself.

¹⁸ ARDITI, Lynn An article on 'Honoring all Commitments Nomura's Woes Won't Sink Mall, Experts Say' in *The Providence Journal-Bulletin* October 23, 1998, Friday, All Editions pp.1F

¹⁹ The former Nomura Asset Capital Corporation, which appeared to operate largely independently of its Japanese owners, had earned a reputation for risk taking. Capital America remains 100 percent owned by its parent, Nomura Holding America.

²⁰ Following the 1998 stock market crisis.

To ensure that this development was realized, substantial public subsidies were placed on top of the \$460million private investment. Also, the owners have signed a tax treaty with the municipality under which it foregoes property tax payments for 20 years. The state also waived much of its expected sales tax for 15 years, as well as providing other subsidies²¹. The mall was finally opened in August 1999.

Water Place

On 26 March 1999²², plans for a six-story retail development called Water Place were unveiled. The development by Forest City Ratner Co. of New York would be located on the vacant lot facing the Providence Place mall and bordering Waterplace Park in downtown Providence. The 165,000-square-foot development would feature record and bookstores and other entertainment businesses on the first floor, other retail outlets above and 300 parking spaces atop the structure. Although the developer had not secure necessary local approvals and a city tax break it had wanted, they projected the completion date to be spring 2001. The project has been delayed.

Providence Marketplace

On 20 October 1999, the city announced another retail development, \$33 million Providence Marketplace would be built on the site of the Silver Top Diner and the demolished Merchants Cold Storage Warehouse.

Developer Richard N. Wasserman wanted the marketplace, which will be just west of the mall, to have the feel of an old time village center with an open-air food market, pushcarts and entertainers. The market will sell retail and wholesale items ranging from fruit and fish, to arts and crafts. It was proposed to cater to other retailers who wanted to feed off crowds attracted by big, new malls. The biggest draw would be opening the marketplace year-round, with heaters blowing from canopies over the stalls. The all-weather aspect "adds charm," Wasserman said. However, the project was delayed, as Silver Top Dinner did not want to move from its place for a long while.

The Academic Market

Today, the Providence renaissance is much talked about and it is always associated with the WaterFire and Providence Place Mall. Both projects have created a significant impact to Providence, and have shifted the focus of activities from Downcity, the original retail core northwards to the confluence of the three rivers. Some angered quarters championed that it was the city's colleges and universities that saved the downtown²³.

²¹ MOTTE, Mark T and WEIL, Lawrence A 2000

²² The Associated Press State & Local Wire March 27, 1999, Saturday, AM cycle An article on 'New shopping center for downtown Providence'

²³ PHIPPS, Peter An article on 'Another School of Thought on the Revival of Downcity' in The Providence Journal-Bulletin (Providence, RI) November 18, 2001 Sunday All Editions pp F01

They claimed that since 1993 the Johnston and Wales University had invested about \$80 million in downtown to buy and rehabilitate dozens of properties; resulting in them owning 47 building with 1,300 students living, shopping, eating and clubbing within the city blocks along the south side of downtown. In 2001, the Brown University and RISD also made plans to move into the city from its original campus across the rivers.

Traffic Re-circulation

Following the recommendation of Downcity Plan, in 2001 the city launched an aggressive 43.4million traffic re-circulation plan to rid downtown of bottlenecks, make traffic flow smoother, make central city streets easier to negotiate, improve road signs and turning several one-way streets into two-way streets.

Lessons Learnt

One thing is for sure, the ‘renaissance’ could not have happened by putting the infrastructure and physical environment in place and hoping that these ‘seeds’ will grow healthily. It happened because the ‘seed was nurtured’ with the nourishment of the activities and programs, and an institution.

The revitalization effort began with plans that were more physical oriented rather than focused on activities. The rail and river relocation projects set the stage for the revitalization effort. The major boost came when WaterFire was launched and performed. The narration showed that these plans by themselves were not able to draw people out to the created spaces, and that physical development alone would not lead to effective revitalization. Therefore, a revitalization project will be successful when the space provided is activated with activities, events and programs.

On hindsight, one could ask if the city would achieve the success if they had considered the management aspect of the project earlier. In the 1986 and 1994 plans, both consultants had proposed for a non-profit organization to be set up to steer the task; but the city did not pick up the recommendations. This could partly be attributed to the strong government that Rhode Island enjoyed. Both the state and city government worked hard to push the revitalization effort and had invested heavily in formulating, facilitating the development and executing of the plans. Providence is very important to them because it is the center of the state and the city. Furthermore, the city was blessed with an illustrious mayor, Mayor Ciancci who had served tirelessly for many years and had been successful in transforming Providence into an ideal city to live in. Thus, there was no need and urgency for the private sector to come together to champion the effort.

However, the public sector could only do so much and facilitate up to a certain point. There is still a need to form new institutions to provide the planning and management of the events and activities and a need for the partnership between the public and private sectors to work together to make the commitment and drive to push for project to new heights.

PART 3: CONCLUSION

Money is never the problem in downtown development – money can always be found ... money is available in both the business side of the economy and in the public side ... the truly crucial ingredient is COMMITMENT. With commitment, a series of vital steps begin. With commitment to an idea or a project, that idea or project becomes elevated to a much higher level on the priority ladder. That means that with whatever funds are around, from whatever sources, the project backed by real commitments moves high in priorities. The analogy for downtown is that if we can build real commitments to downtown revitalization in our downtowners, in our citizens and our officials, we can make downtown revitalization a high-priority goal. If as part of this we can generate commitment to a specific project, we can then increase the priority status of these projects – swiftly and high - to the point where they become fundable.

- ALEXANDER, Laurence A (editor) 1982

The commitment should be based on the civic interest and not business or self-interest.

Chapter 10 Reflections and Future Directions

Reflections

The Approach and Process

I had approached the thesis writing in a slightly different way. Instead of fixing an end point, i.e. a proposition, I have in the past months wandered around few themes searching for answers to my questions.

When I was leaving for my studies here, my sponsors had informed me that the company wanted me to learn about urban design. I have chosen not to be immersed in the design aspect only as I believed that urban design encompasses something bigger. This led me to my search for an answer in this thesis.

Having worked in an agency that stresses heavily on the outcomes and emphasizes on the delivery of a product and its quality, I am concerned about implementation issues. Also, I personally believe in getting things done as oppose to just drawing up plans, putting theories to practice, and the idea that ‘planners and urban designers should ‘dream and scheme’ at the same time’¹.

In the two years that I was here, I have observed that many projects in the US were carried out with some form of public-private partnerships. In the few cities that I had visited, I observed that the private sectors were forming coalitions among themselves, and with the public sector, to push for growth and developments in their cities. These ideas intrigued me and I wanted to understand what they were all about.

They also reminded me of a similar attempt by an agency in Singapore to set up a coalition of business owners in the national shopping area, Orchard Road so that they would be involved in the urban design issues. I also asked if the partnerships could be a useful model to develop the entertainment area in Singapore for it has been difficult to get the business owners, owners, developers and various agencies to come together to agree on the best way to build an area like Times Square, New York.

As such, this thesis is a result of the process of discovering the meanings and intricacies of urban planning and design, and a record of my two-year experience and observations in this country. It serves as a record of my current understanding of what is the profession about and how to begin and approach urban planning and design. Within this thesis, I have only skimmed the surface and covered a small portion of these themes. I might be totally wrong in the formulation and interpretation of the ideas, but I believe that this is an important step.

¹ Dr. TAN Kim Siew, former Chief Executive Officer and Chief Planner for the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore. 1998

The Urban Design Framework

I hope that professionals, urban designers, architects, planners and other people who are interested in the development of cities would find this thesis useful. In particular, I hope that the proposed urban design framework would be helpful in formulating a comprehensive understanding of urban design and urban development. I also hope that the thesis would generate discussions on the role of urban design and the public-private partnerships institutions in the downtown development.

'Urban Legends'

In the process of writing the thesis, I have encountered the following differing views about urban design and public-private partnership:

- a. Urban design is about designing physical environment only;
- b. Urban design is an end to solve downtown's problems;
- c. Urban design is carrying out an urban development; and
- d. There is only one model of public-private partnership.

Urban design is about designing physical environment only

Firstly, urban design has been thought of as a profession that dealt only with the design of physical environment, very much like architecture or an extension of it. There are two flaws in thinking of it this way: one is associated with what architects really do and the other on how narrow we want to define urban design to be.

Architecture is not about design only. While the education of an architect should focus on design, the practice is entirely different. Unless a person is hired to design only, designing takes up a small portion of the practicing architect's time. Although there are architects who do nothing else but design, a majority of architects spend large amounts of their time managing issues of development, client, authority, developer and contractors. Similarly, unless an urban designer is employed to solely design, he will have to handle issues of development and will spend most of the time managing change; from the office to the worksite, and in between these two places, e.g. city hall. Therefore, there is a danger to limit the professional concern to design.

Unlike architecture but similar to planning and policy-making, there are two ways to 'design' an urban environment. They are the plan-led and rule-led approaches. Urban designers who use the plan-led approach should be able to draw and present ideas in graphical forms, while those who use the rule-led approach should be proficient in law-making² and be able to articulate clearly and concisely ideas and intentions. Both need to be able to visualize the final outcome and know how to manage the possible outcomes. Therefore, urban designers have to be able to do more than designing.

² The urban designers need to know the jurisdiction and boundaries of influences they have on the urban environment.

Designers should cooperate with other professionals in the process of making good urban environment. There are many talented people who may not be proficient in design aspects but nonetheless, can contribute positively. They may appreciate design and know better ways of delivering a product, acting like facilitators and managers.

Since most products take years to realize and involve more than a single urban designer, there is much to be gained from the synergy of the different strengths that everyone brings to the urban design field. However, this does not mean that everyone should focus on and specialize in his or her area of interest. On one hand, the designers have to be knowledgeable about the management aspects, and on the other the managers must have appreciation for design and some design skills.

History has shown that urban designers need to heed the social, political and economical considerations and adopt a comprehensive view when performing urban design. When they do not take a broad, comprehensive view but are focused on design instead, the profession will develop a myopic view that urban design and urban environment are finite. Urban design is not like architecture where the architects only design and see to completion the buildings they have designed. After the building is completed, the management takes over. Hence, architecture is finite. But, urban design is not finite. There is no end to the process, for urban environments are like living organisms. The urban environment changes as it is developed. Change is constant phenomenon and the forces of change can come from many areas. The urban designers would have to keep on learning and make improvements.

History has also shown urban designers that well-intentioned and good design does not necessarily provide society with the environment that people want to live in or the way that people want the city to be developed. Urban designers cannot and should not be used as a form of social engineering. Nor should urban designers serve a client, the owner or developer only. Urban design is not like architecture. To me, an architect only needs to serve a client with a brief or specification of what a development ought to be. The basic objective and requirement of an architect is to achieve the goals specified in client's brief and comply with the rules and regulation set up by the city and society. In urban design, the urban designer has to set the rules and regulations for the benefit of society. Apart from delivering what is needed by the developers or the party who writes the paycheck, they have to understand what society needs.

Urban designers should not be use a heavy-handed approach to develop urban environment. This would make them appear 'elitist' and project the wrong image. In doing so, they would exclude themselves and not function effectively. Urban design is a service to the people and urban designers have to be humble. They should view the customers as people and users of the urban environment that they are creating or have created and they have to know the users' needs. In addition to technical knowledge and skills, they need to have the knowledge of a developer, and the ability to observe and understand trends and 'fashions'. They need to seek feedback from their customers on ways to improve the urban design, on why things are happening the way they are, and what the society needs.

This is called customer service and understanding. The private sector normally calls it 'market study'. Christopher Hood termed the mechanisms used by the public sectors as a set of 'effectors' and 'detectors'. Effectors are the tools that are used to make an impact on the world and the detectors are the instruments that are used to take in information³. This is one area of study that is still not developed yet.

Urban design is an end to solve downtown's problems

Some people view urban design as an end to solve downtown's problems. There are two mistaken end-points; the first is when the set of vision, ideas, plan or blueprints is completed, and the other is when the 'projects' are realized on the ground. Urban designers should not think that downtown or development problems can be solved easily by having a set of vision, ideas, plans or blueprints. A lot of work is still required to get these visions, ideas, plans or blueprints implemented. It often takes years for projects to be realized on the ground and longer if there are several parties involved.

When a project has been implemented, the urban designer should learn from the physical manifestation of the vision, ideas, plans or blueprints. The guidelines and rules could have been interpreted differently and used creatively without respecting the original intention. For example, New York's incentive zoning have allowed bonus floor area when developers and owners provide open space. This has yielded different results; some of the open spaces are ambiguous. In these cases, one questioned if society has benefited from the provision of the open spaces or has the rule been bent until it has benefited the owners and developers totally. Professor Jerold Kayden, who studied this phenomenon, has several times said, 'To design is human, to follow-up divine'.

Urban design is carrying out an urban development

Many people believe that by being involved in a singular urban project or by developing architecture in the city, the person has carried out urban design. This is true only if the project fits into the urban fabric and the design has taken into consideration the surrounding urban issues. Urban design does not involve only one project or a singular streetblock; these are architectural works. True urban design involves thinking of the pieces as a whole and considering how each piece relates to another as the city changes, the players in public sector, private sector and community change and the way developments are carried out change.

Within the last few decades there were changes in the way the public sector, the private sector and the people have interacted with each other. This happened as the concern of each of these players has grown over time into a complex web that overlapped each other. This can be illustrated in Figure 64 on the next page.

³ HOOD, Christopher 1983 The Tools of the Government Chatnam House Publishers, Inc. Chatham, New Jersey pp.3

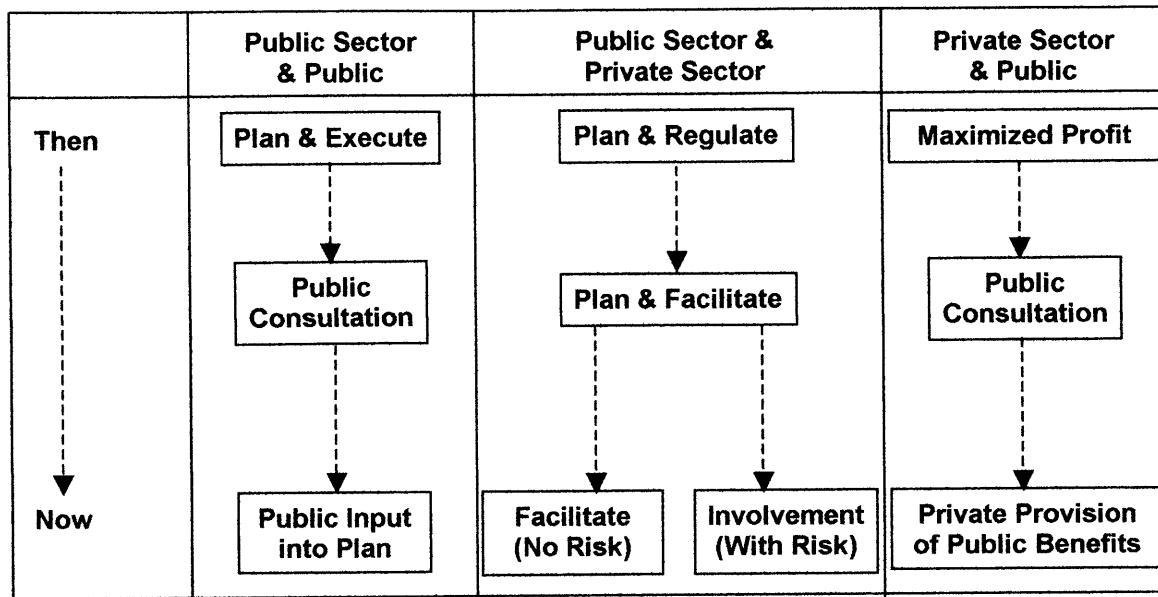


Figure 64: The Overlapping Concerns

There is only one model of public-private partnership in urban development

Some people have viewed 'public-private partnerships' to only include specific projects, where both the public and private sectors shared some economical and financial risk. They have yet to consider institutions arrangements as a form of public-private partnership. Fortunately, there is already some literature written about this form of public-private partnerships. And, in the class on 'Public Private Partnership' at Harvard University, Professor Jerold Kayden has defined two types of public-private partnership in urban developments. He called the first the 'joint-venture' model where both the public and private sector shared financial risks. He termed the other 'collaborative efforts' to include the institutional arrangement as a form of public-private partnership.

Perhaps it is difficult for some people to accept these institutions as a form of public-private partnerships because there has yet to be a method to quantify the cost and benefits each party gets out of such partnerships. As most of the costs are shouldered by the private sector, there seems to be no financial risk at stake for the public sector. Besides project specific arrangements like Friend for Post Office Square, the other institutional structure such as business improvement district has not happened in a big way in Boston. One reason is the very successful and influential Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA). The other is because there are old monies in the city and influential people have time and again monopolized or held tremendous influence over certain sectors. Although the urban renewal period 'ended' a long time ago, and BRA has since shrunk to a handful of people, its power, influence and authority are still very strong in the redevelopment of the city. Thus, unlike other cities, there is no dire need yet for another institution to champion the growth and development of the city.

For a long time, the Downtown Crossing Association⁴ was the closest semblance of business improvement district in Boston. Its function is restricted to maintaining the cleanliness and security of the area. It did not have influence over how the area should be managed. The market decides the type of businesses that would establish there; and, it is strongly influenced by the existing businesses. For example, both Filene's and Macy's in the downtown crossing area have guarded against Bloomingdale, Nordstrom and other departmental store from going into the area and setting up their store.

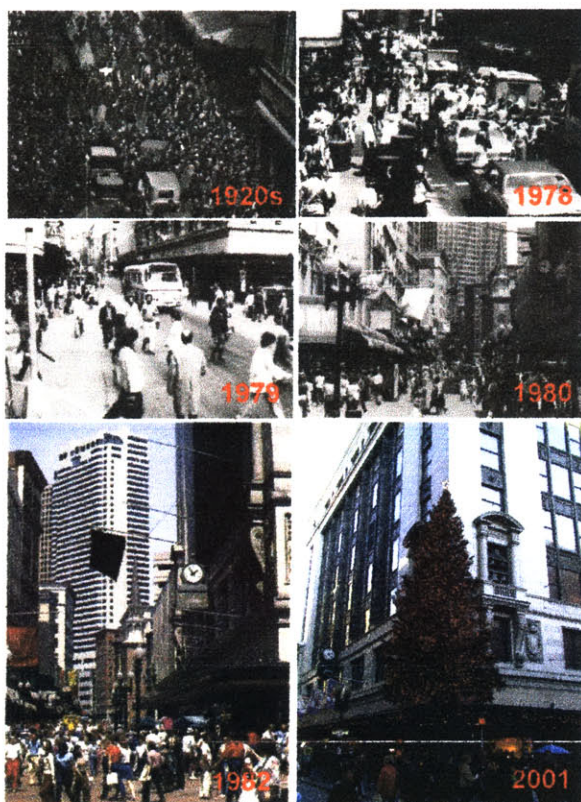


Figure 65: Downtown Crossing, Boston
Views of the junction between Washington
Street and Winter/Summer Streets.

Sources:

1920s, 1978, 1978 & 1980 photographs:
Urban Mass Transportation Administration, 1982
1987 photographs: Boston Redevelopment
Authority, 1983

Perhaps they failed to consider the agglomeration principle to offer and spoil shoppers with choices. In contrast, shopping malls at the suburbs provide the shoppers with choices at very competitive rates. And, they are successful.

When the big retailers failed to break into the Boston market, they went elsewhere. And, the shoppers followed them especially where parking is a lot easier. The result is that Boston and Cambridge shoppers have followed Nordstrom to Providence, and they shop at Worcester and Wrentham.

Business Improvement Districts in Boston

Until now, it was BRA who has coordinated and spearheaded physical improvements to the Downtown Crossing or Washington Street Retail District area.

There is yet an agency influential enough to guide and turn the area into the shopping mecca it used to be.

Recently, there is a concern⁵ that Downtown Crossing needs a grocery store and a variety of other stores.

⁴ In the list kept by the International Downtown Association, this is the only one located in Boston. There are four listed under Massachusetts.

<http://ida-downtown.org/idaportal/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=155&tabid=115>

⁵ ARCHAMBEAULT, Bill reported on the views of the recent forums hosted by the Historic Neighborhoods' Downtown Committee and the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties in an article on 'Forums: Time for city to invest in Downtown Crossing' in *Boston Business Journal*, March 22, 2002 <http://boston.bizjournals.com/boston/stories/2002/03/25/newscolumn3.html>

According to Ronald Druker, luring a large grocery store to the area is an unlikely prospect without a significant subsidy⁶. In his opinion, the area will become more vibrant when it becomes a business improvement district (BID) and is run as a private-public partnership, i.e. when the city and the Downtown Crossing Association combine their effort to enhance the area's appearance, safety and cleanliness.

Druker⁷ was one of a core of supporters who wanted to create Boston's first BID⁸ in the Downtown Crossing Retail District since 1997. In 2000, they sought Mayor Menino's involvement and support after meeting with strong oppositions from key state lawmakers and the Boston Police Patrolmen's Association⁹. The Legislature's concern was that the BID proponents had wanted to change a 1994 law to disallow property owners the option of not paying for the cleaning, policing and marketing services. The Boston Police Patrolmen's Association has objected to the proposal on the grounds that the BID's use of new private security guards would take away police jobs. At the beginning of this year¹⁰, Mayor Menino was still pushing for the bill to create BIDs in Boston.

Although there were talks about creating BIDs for other areas in Boston such as Fort Point Channel and the Central Artery Project, the term¹¹ has not been used widely. For example, a 'Park Improvement District' (PID) was one of the ideas proposed to manage the future land above the Central Artery. Instead of pushing for a previous bill, the city proposed a bill to create a non-profit entity to 'plan, manage, maintain and operate the open space' on 5 March 2002¹². The term PID has not been used although the non-profit entity has a similar role as a BID. A Board of Trustees appointed by the speaker, the Senate president, the governor and the mayor will govern the non-profit entity. It will also have a board of directors made up of interested parties in the affected area and an advisory group. Non-residential property within the boundary of a newly demarcated 'special taxing zone' will be levied with an incremental real estate tax.

The International Downtown Association has chosen to hold its 48th Annual Conference from September 28 to October 1, 2002 in Boston in an effort to promote and understand the readiness of Bostonian to accept such institutional structure.

⁶ *ibid.* Quoting Ronald Druker, president of the Boston-based Druker Co. Ltd. and a featured panelist at both programs.

⁷ THE DRUKER COMPANY 1999 In a proposal for 'The Campus Partners: The Gateway Center - Ingredients for Success/Recommendations' Web page linked to 'Campus Partners: University Gateway Center' <http://www.acs.ohio-state.edu/org/osucp/gateway/master/druker/ingred.html>

⁸ The project is under the Mayor Menino's Washington Street Task Force.

⁹ MASON, Edward An article on 'Menino administration to launch BID campaign' in *Boston Business Journal* February 25 2000 print edition
<http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/stories/2000/02/28/story1.html>

¹⁰ BOSTON HERALD EDITORIAL An article on 'Mayor's new ideas are still elusive' in *The Boston Herald* Tuesday, January 8 2002 <http://www2.bostonherald.com/news/opinion/edt101082002.htm>

¹¹ The name might have been dropped since 'calling it that would likely be the kiss of death as it was for the proposed Downtown Crossing BID'. – BOSTON HERALD EDITORIAL An article on 'Mayor, Speaker Join on Artery Acreage' in *The Boston Herald* Wednesday, March 6 2002
<http://www2.bostonherald.com/news/opinion/edt103062002.htm>

¹² *ibid.*

Applications

I hope that the proposed urban design framework will be used as a starting point to approach urban design and developments. It is important to remember that the framework is just a model. It does not mean that I advocate applying the model to every project or have every city establish the business improvement districts. Not every city may want to adopt the business improvement district model. Some cities like San Diego have found that a development corporation model works perfectly fine for them. Urban development, or rather real estate, is very local. Each urban development is unique and will need a different interpretation of applications. Often, a model has to be retrofitted before applied to another area.

Sometimes, an old model should be discarded in favor of a new one quickly. The problem is not because of the chosen model or mechanism. The mechanism might not seem to work well because of the timing of the development. The development might have to sit through tough times first. Meanwhile, the city might learn from the experience. Antoin de St. Exupery wrote in the book titled 'The Little Prince' that 'the wisdom of good governance is to know when is the right time.'

Rebecca Robertson¹³, one of the people behind the successful revitalization of Times Square observed that many downtown revitalization projects were initiated during the 1970's when the government was more proactive. Although the projects like the Redevelopment of the 42nd Street seemed to take forever to be implemented, they were very successful urban developments upon completion. She questioned if other models such as the public-private partnerships ones should replace this model. She observed that what may be needed is to understand why is it that city is incapable of doing large scale planning today.

On the other hand, we cannot be timid and skeptical when choosing to apply new models. For example, some cautioned against applying the institutional structure widely, arguing that minorities would be displaced. We should not abandon a model but asked if the minorities have really been left out and who are the people that we cared about. We should work for the benefit of the whole society. We can only tolerate the homeless people, drunks, drug addicts and prostitution to a certain degree as long as they do not become a nuisance. But, many of us cannot tolerate being panhandled and disturbed everyday when we walked along the streets. Thus, displacing these people and giving them proper guidance, help and shelter may not be a bad thing. In this way, it improves the persons' life. Society will be better off having fewer of them on the streets and containing their activities to certain areas.

¹³ Lecture on 'Land Acquisition, Disposition and Urban Redevelopment: The Public Perspective in 42nd Street Case dated 1 April 2002 for joint Harvard Graduate School of Design and Kennedy School of Government course on 'Public and Private Development'.

The 'Incomplete' Project

There were a number of things that I had set out to do at the beginning of the thesis that I was not able to complete or was unsuccessful in carrying them out. I have planned to write extensively about Times Square, New York; Downtown San Diego and Center City Development Corporation; and Downtown Seattle and Downtown Seattle Association. I had wanted to show how urban design and institutional system can be applied at the citywide scale and the complexities of applying it.

By the end of April 2002, I realized that these tasks were beyond the little time that I had left to do a decent job, and I have already incorporated a few learning points from the cases when I was discussing on the themes. Also, 'there was no need to reinvent the wheel' for Lynn Sagalyn has presented the story of Times Square in great detail in her work titled, 'Times Square Roulette'. The latter two examples proved to be much more complex and did not fit into either of the two categories that had been set up in Part 2. Since the four written examples are rich enough to demonstrate the thesis, I have decided to stop at these (for now).

I also wanted to demonstrate the claim that the stricter the institutions are in making sure that developments comply with urban design guidelines that were set up, the more successful they will be in achieving the desired image for the downtown; and, the more successful they will be in achieving downtown revitalization, the easier for them to market their cities. To address these issues, I would need to conduct a survey and interviews. I have not managed to get around to do both in the course of writing this thesis. These can be one of the future works.

Further Studies

There are also many questions that one can ask about institutions such as the business improvement districts (BIDs). They have been around long enough to establish patterns and offer lessons. There are opportunities to quantify the effect of these institutions on the success of downtown revitalization, check if they have changed their objectives over the years, and how the institution sees its role and functions in the future.

We can also find out why some cities have more than one type of institutions. Is it because the cities are newer? Or is it because there is legislation available? What does each of the institutions do? Do they share the same functions? Do these institutions compete with each other? Or how do they complement each other?

In a city that has an institution for a different area, do the institutions work together to improve the city as a whole? Where are they located and how far apart are they from each other? How are the different areas in the city integrated together? Do they integrate at all? How do they relate to each other? If they are located next to each other, will it be better if there is only one non-profit organization to champion the effort? If not, what happens to the areas in between?

We can compare them to examine how the urban environments in each of these institutions differ from each other from an urban design point of view. Is each area different in the physical experience? Do they look the same? Do they have the same signage or sidewalk design? Did they learn from each other? What types of business do they attract? Are there any similarities in the urban environment of each area?

Speculating Ahead

The effect of globalization has been intense in the last decade. It will be more intense in the future. As the world gets smaller due to globalization, cities have to compete harder for the share of economy and development while offering greater choices for the people to live, work and play. What will happen in the next ten to twenty years? What should the urban forms be liked?

I would argue that cities will collaborate with those closer to each other to promote themselves as a region and compete with similar collaborated cities in other parts of the world. They would have the effect similar to the 'stock-market' centers. For example, Boston, New York and Washington DC could band together to provide the academics, the economics and the managers different types of environments to live, work and recreate. There will be good transportation systems to shuttle people quickly from one spot to another, possibly using high-speed trains like those in Japan. This regional growth concept is similar to but larger than the metropolitan growth concept. There will be a return to regional and comprehensive planning. Each city will offer a different lifestyle and environment. Boston will keep the low-rise brownstones apartment that it is famous for. New York will promote the densities that kept the throbbing '24-7-365' activities. And, Washington DC will offer a totally different environment from Boston and New York.

There will also be more collaboration between cities from different parts of the world through 'sister city' programs. The cities will share information and expertise to help each other to promote growth and compete with others.

The developed countries will look towards developing countries for urban design solutions. By then, the developing countries will have tried a lot of strategies to solve the problem of building megalopolis to house millions of people.

Chapter 11 Summary

The thesis attempts to demonstrate that a comprehensive understanding and application of urban design could lead to a successful¹ downtowns' revitalization. To reach a comprehensive understanding, urban design is redefined as a matrix that looked at urban design as both a product and process.

The urban design framework, described urban design for downtowns, is not only about formulating, executing and regulating the physical developments. It should take into considerations the development, marketing events and activities, management of spaces and places, and provision of services to the downtowns' customers. The framework can be used as an element to shape the desired environment for marketing and promotional purposes.

Another observation is that urban designers should give important consideration to the management mechanism. This is a critical part of the process for all grand or small plans, and the urban environments need to be maintained and promoted once they are implemented.

The question of which would be the best implementing agency is answered through the observation and understanding of new and largely non-profit institutions that were formed as coalitions between the public and private sectors. These public private partnerships institutions, like Friends of Post Office Square, Lowertown Redevelopment Corporations, the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Downtown Associations, and Center City Development Corporations, are fast becoming the primary organizations that initiate, champion and facilitate downtown projects and revitalization efforts. Each of these institutions presented a common platform to bring all stakeholders together to agree or agree to disagree on the objective and direction of downtown revitalization and growth.

To carry out their tasks, these institutions performed roles and functions that could be grouped into two main categories, i.e. design and management. Their responsibility is to ensure that there is an efficient and effective process that would make sure that the vibrant and attractive physical environments (hardware) and the diverse variety of activities and programs (software) are put in place, well run and taken care of; i.e., these institutions make use of the urban design framework.

Therefore, urban design and institutions like downtown improvement districts are important mechanisms² for downtown to successfully revitalize itself.

¹ Success is measured by the ability of an area to impress an image onto the user and to draw repeated visits, and the volume of users visiting and spending in the area.

² Used here to mean *an instrument or a process, physical or mental, by which something is done or comes into being*: "The mechanism of oral learning is largely that of continuous repetition" (T.G.E. Powell) – from www.dictionary.com

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I feel that I am lucky to be here not sooner nor later for this is an exciting period to be in the US as many downtowns are experiencing a revival and there are many projects going on in every city that I have visited. It is through my travels that I learn how to see.

And, I am still learning how to see.